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יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד



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“כל האומר דבר בשם אומרו מביא גאולה לעולם”

A correction: “When Two Jews Meet,” “Conversation on Moshiach at Dollars,” and “Before The Line Stretched Down Eastern Parkway,” all appearing in last week’s issue, were compiled and written by **Menachem Ziegelbaum**.

We apologize to the author for the inadvertent omission of his byline.



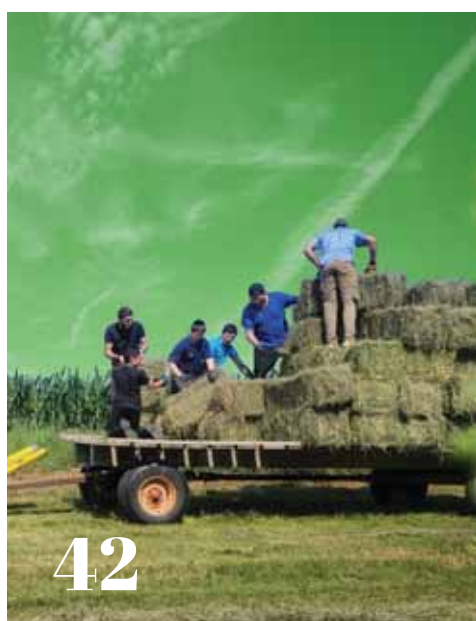
1,500 Issues and 1 Question:
Could we Present This to The Rebbe?



Jews Don't Run!
By Rabbi Yossy Goldman



Minted For The Moment
By Avrohom Rainitz



The Shtetl in the Corn Belt
By Avrohom Rainitz



Two Letters For a Milestone Magazine

Two freely translated letters of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach to the Chabad House in Paulo, Brazil in honor of milestones issues of their monthly journal

...To the management of the Chabad House - Paulo, Brazil
Greeting and blessing:

I was pleased to receive the news that you are preparing to publish the 100th issue of your journal, having merited and succeeded - thank G-d - in publishing it without interruption for about 100 months.

The Journal's Influence Upon Its Readership

First and foremost, this fact itself is good news, for it attests to the journal's influence upon its readership. We have been assured that words that come from the heart enter the heart and have their effect - especially when accompanied by the living example and deeds of the Chabad House's activities.

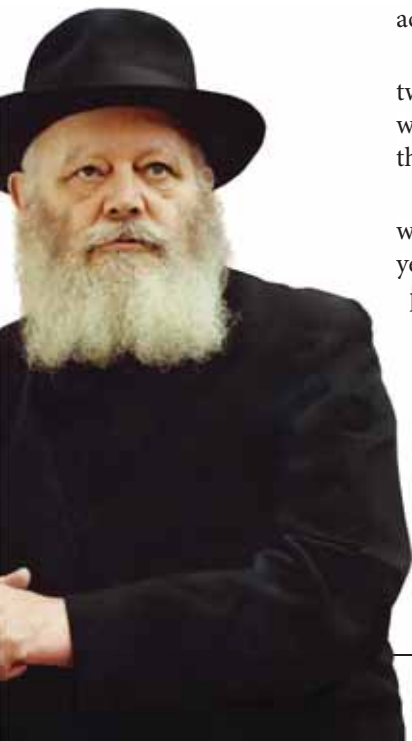
May it be fulfilled in you the saying of our Sages - which applies directly to our subject - "One who has a maneh (*one hundred* zuz) desires two hundred," etc. And "the will of those who revere Him, he shall fulfill" - may the A-lmighty fulfill the desires of their hearts for good, in the number mentioned.

Although Moshiach Tzidkeinu will certainly and surely come a very long time before that, even in the days of Moshiach the mitzva of "Love your fellow person as yourself" - a great principle of the Torah - will remain in full force, including the influence upon every individual to reach complete fulfillment in all their affairs through daily life in accordance with our Torah, the Torah of life.

“

It goes without saying that your success in publishing it without interruption over such a long period testifies to the journal's influence upon its readership.

”



Activity That Mirrors Life in the Times of Moshiach

And as has been discussed on many occasions, the most fitting preparation and effort to hasten the coming of Moshiach and the true and complete Redemption is activity that mirrors the order of life in that era - to repair the world under the sovereignty of the A-lmighty - and in plain terms: spreading Yiddishkeit, Torah study, and the fulfillment of its mitzvos in a manner of ever-increasing light, founded on the principle that action is the main thing - the actual fulfillment of practical mitzvos.

Although this is a great undertaking, it is also a cherished one, and its success is assured when done in a manner of *טופח על מנת להטפוח* [that the influencer is effected enough to influence others] - including influencing the readers so that they too will strive to become “lights that illuminate,” each one lighting up their own place and surroundings with the candle of mitzva and the light of Torah.

With blessing for success and good tidings in all the above,

M. Schneerson

(From a letter dated Yom HaHilula 10 Shevat 5743/1983)

From 100 to 200 and Beyond

...I was pleased to receive the news that you are preparing to publish the **200th** issue of the journal “Chabad.”

It goes without saying that your success in publishing it without interruption over such a long period testifies to the journal's influence upon its readership. We have been assured that words that come from the heart enter the heart and have their effect - especially when accompanied by action and the living example of the Chabad House's activities.

...May the saying of our Sages: “One who has a maneh [100] desires two hundred; one who has two hundred desires... etc.” be fulfilled with you. And may G-d fulfill the desires of their hearts for good, in the number mentioned.

Special emphasis on all the aforementioned is called for this year, which is filled with a “**triple holiness.**” Many sacred occasions this year appear in sets of three - the pattern of a chazaka (established permanence)

...This includes the success of publishing and distributing the aforementioned journal, whose purpose is the spreading of Yiddishkeit, Torah and its mitzvos in general, and the dissemination of the wellsprings of Chassidus outward in particular...

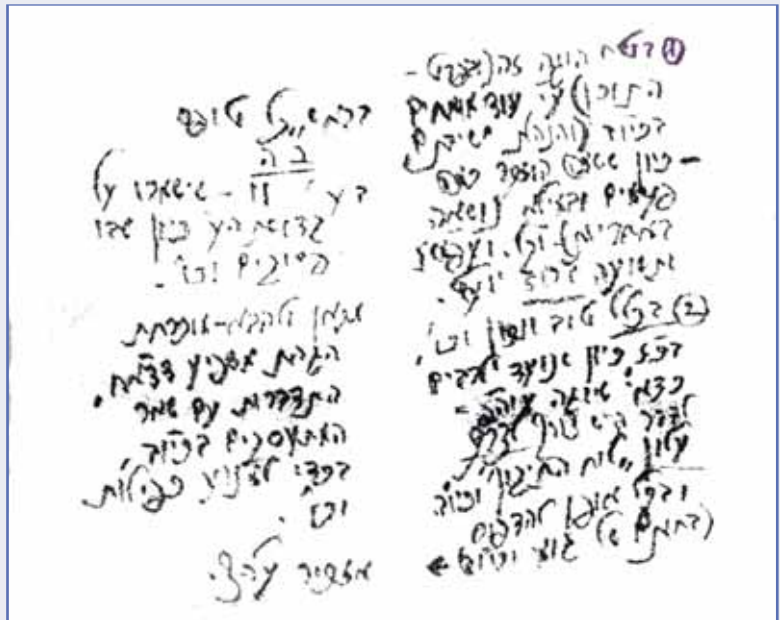
May G-d grant you success to go from strength to strength in your holy work both in the distribution of the journal and in all the other activities of the Chabad House...

(From a letter dated Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5751/1991)



Publishing Instructions

The following is a response written on the proofreading sheets of a bulletin that had been prepared for press, containing general instructions on the subject of publishing:



בטח הוגה זה (ובפרט התוכן) ע"י עוד מומחים בכיו"ב [בכיוצא-בזה] (והנהלת ישיבתם - כיון ששמה הוזכר כמה פעמים ובמילא נושאה באחריות).
וק"ל.

ועפמ"ן [ועל פי מה שנאמר] - ותשועה ברוב יועץ.

I trust that this bulletin - and its content in particular - was reviewed by additional experts in similar matters, (as well as by the yeshiva

administration, since the yeshiva's name is mentioned several times in the bulletin and it therefore bears responsibility for the content. This requires no further elaboration.

And as the written: "Salvation comes through an abundance of counsel."

בכלל טוב ונכון וכו', בכ"ז כיון שנועד לרבים כדאי שיוגה עוה"פ - לברר
היש צורך לצרף עלון "לוח התיקון" וכיו"ב.

ובכל אופן להדפיס (בחותם של גומי וכיו"ב) בראש כל טופס ב"ה
בע' 11 - שישמרו על קדושת הע' כיון שבו פסוקים וכו'.

While the bulletin is generally good and proper, etc., since it is intended for a wider audience, it would be worthwhile to proofread it once more before distribution - to determine whether it is necessary to include a "correction sheet" or the like.

In any case, before distributing it, imprint ב"ה at the top of each copy (using a rubber stamp or similar).

On page 11 - include a message instructing readers to treat the bulletin with the appropriate sanctity, since it contains pesukim, etc.

מכאן ולהבא - מוכרחת הגהת משפיע דדא"ח, התדברות עם שאר המתעסקים
בכיו"ב, בכדי למנוע כפילות וכו'.

Going forward - it is imperative that a mashpia of Chassidus review such materials and that coordination take place with the others involved in similar work, in order to avoid duplication, etc.

אזכיר עה"צ.

I will mention this in prayer at the *Tziyun*. ■





Chumros On Pesach - Q&A's

A few Q&A's about Chumros on Pesach from a comprehensive interview with Mara D'Asra and member of the Crown Heights Beis Din, Harav Yosef Y. Braun

Q. WHAT IS CHABAD'S GENERAL APPROACH TO PESACH CHUMROS AND HIDDURIM?

A. Let's distinguish between the two words themselves: *chumra* and *hiddur*. While the terms are used interchangeably, nonetheless for the purpose of our discussion it would be worthwhile to establish a distinction. Chumra means stringency, with connotations that it is challenging, difficult, strict, and narrow. Hiddur, in contrast, means the beautification of a mitzva.

There is an old *vort* about the three different approaches to mitzvos. One can view them as 613 different *segulos*, i.e. "what's in it for me," or, worse, as 613 problems to contend with. The third – and ideal – way is to think of the mitzvos as 613 opportunities to connect with Hashem. Of course, this is the authentic Torah approach and is particularly highlighted in Chassidus.

The added stringency or beautification then enhances our connection. Still, when taking on a *chumra* or *hiddur*, it is important to understand the historical background and halachic discussions involved. A sefer entitled

Sheilos u'Teshuvos Min Hashamayim, written in the early 13th century, by Rabbi Jacob of Marvège (which incorporates responses he received from *shamayim* to various halachic questions), discusses this subject. The author (actually, the Author with a capital A) writes that since avoiding chometz on Pesach was one of the very first mitzvos the Jews accepted from Hashem, therefore, our ancestors embraced it with *ahava, chiba v'reus*: love, affection, and warmth. Because of that tremendous initial enthusiasm, they were quite *machmir*, and the special care and attention paid to Pesach has only grown over the generations.

Q. SO, IF ONE WISHES TO OBSERVE EXTRA CHUMROS FOR PESACH, WHAT IS THE PROPER APPROACH?

A. Simchas Yom Tov, celebrating Pesach with joy, is a mitzva from the Torah for men, women and children. Hiddurim, on the other hand, are just that – hiddurim, not obligations. If Pesach puts someone in a Tishah B'Av mood, hiddurim are out of place (see Chassidim Mesaprim I:637). People need to approach a Rav or mashpia with any questions. They may learn that some of their

so-called “hiddurim” have no basis whatsoever in halacha or minhag.

The Rebbe quotes (in his account of Pesach 5692 with the Friediker Rebbe) in the name of the Rebbe Rashab that one should not take on extra chumros on Pesach, so that one will not be making a *neder*. On a different occasion, the Rebbe Rashab said after selling his chometz, “I’m very scared of chumros.” This is difficult to understand; the Alter Rebbe brings from the Arizal that one should “follow all chumros regarding chometz.” Indeed, the Rebbe Rashab himself observed many extra chumros beyond the norm on Pesach.

One lesson we can learn from the Rebbe Rashab’s strong language is the importance of taking on our Pesach hiddurim “*bli neder*.” Not all hiddurim are suitable for all people. A person has to be *makir es mekomo*: to know whether a practice is suitable to take on or whether it is beyond their level. Discuss this with a mashpia or Rav. And when one decides to keep a particular hiddur, one should do so with both simcha and humility, recalling that many people of the highest spiritual caliber did not keep such hiddurim.

Q. AFTER THE WALLS NEAR THE STOVE ARE WASHED, DO THEY HAVE TO BE COVERED AS WELL?

A. There is no real reason to cover walls, since we don’t eat from our walls. People may cover their walls if they wish. In case one is concerned that a hot chometz pot has touched the backsplash or a wall near the stove, and then a Pesachdik pot would touch the same spot, there is room in halacha to say to cover the area.

Q. AFTER THE REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER SHELVES, DOOR, ETC.,

ARE THOROUGHLY WASHED, MUST THEY BE COVERED IN ADDITION? IF SO, WHAT COVERING MATERIAL IS BEST?

A. Covering the inside of the refrigerator has a real, practical reason, since chometzdik food is actually put there. Because we are not allowed even a *mashehu* of chometz on Pesach, and because it is very hard to clean every crevice of the refrigerator, people cover it to be safe. In days of old, when they stored food in wooden closets, the Maharil cautioned to cover those closets used during the year for chometz, even though they were cleaned for Pesach.

Covering with foil may lead to transgressing the important halachic prohibition of *bal tashchis* since foil is known to cause refrigerators to break. If a refrigerator breaks down during Yom Tov and all the food spoils, this greatly compounds the issue. Therefore, plastic refrigerator lining is a good choice for covering.

Q. IF CLOTHING HAS BEEN WASHED IN DETERGENT OR DRY CLEANED, DO POCKETS NEED TO BE CHECKED BEFORE PESACH?

A. There is no need to check the pockets of clothing which has been washed in soap or dry cleaned before Pesach (rendering all possible chometz inedible). This only applies to clothing which was not worn afterwards, so that there wasn’t a chance to put fresh chometz into the pockets after cleaning. ■

(From an Interview by Mrs. Chana Shloush of the N’shei Chabad Newsletter)



1,500 Issues, One Consistent Message

1 **THE FIFTEEN-HUNDREDTH ISSUE OF BEIS MOSHIACH** that you are holding right now marks a milestone for everyone who has had a hand in this weekly publication - the editorial staff, the publishers, the writers, and all those who have been part of this work since that very first issue, which came out in the weeks following Gimmel Tammuz 5754.

It is a milestone for everyone who has worked, and continues to work, across the years - through different eras and different roles - in the ongoing process of building, expanding, and developing this journal. It is a milestone for everyone who has played a role in making sure that through all these years, even when it was far from clear how the next issue would come together, we never stopped bringing the word of the King, the word of the Rebbe's House, Beis Moshiach, to the whole world.

And it is a milestone for the publication's most important partners - its true 'shareholders' - the people it was created for: every single reader.

At the end of the day, issue fifteen hundred is just that - one issue, like every one that came

before it. But the number it carries represents 1,500 issues in which the editorial staff and the entire team pushed to improve, renew, diversify, and grow in every way possible.

2 For a magazine, staying current is essential - without that, no publication has a real reason to exist. But the medium should never become the point in itself, with new graphics and changing editorial styles serving only the packaging and the presentation. That is why, alongside all the changes and upgrades Beis Moshiach has gone through over the years, something has remained constant: you do not need a logo or a particular design to recognize an issue of Beis Moshiach. A single glance is enough - because you will always see the image of the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach shlita on the cover.

Beis Moshiach needs nothing more than that to tell you what it is and what it stands for. Look at the fine print and you will find no grand declarations - just a simple, straightforward description: "A global weekly for spreading the Besuras HaGeula," or the current English version, "Bringing Moshiach values into our

“ That it has reached fifteen hundred issues without a break, without backing down – even when it meant pushing through obstacles of every kind – is a real achievement.

homes.” That is all - and that is everything. It is what we are, who we are, and why we exist.

The fact is that Beis Moshiach reaching fifteen hundred issues is anything but a foregone conclusion. A group of bachurim - “Chayolei Beis Dovid” - along with a handful of Chassidische yungeleit who set out to put together a newsletter and some articles in the period following Gimmel Tammuz 5754 could easily have ended up like so many other publications of similar or even greater scope that appeared in the Chabad community over the years and eventually faded away.

That it has reached fifteen hundred issues without a break, without backing down - even when it meant pushing through obstacles of every kind - is a real achievement.

And the same is true of the fact that, from its very first issue, Beis Moshiach has been the central platform for expressing faith and commitment to the final shlichus and the singular mission: *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach in the most literal sense - as it has always been, and even more so - without compromise and without qualification. A home where everyone - rabbis, activists, shluchim, Chassidim, supporters, and *mekuravim* - can find a way to express

their emuna, deepen their connection, and strengthen their dedication to the shlichus.

There are many other achievements that could be listed - among them the influence of Beis Moshiach, through its very existence and ongoing publication - and through what appears in its pages - on the continued direction of Chabad-Lubavitch Chassidus as a whole, including (and especially) those who do not necessarily openly identify with its approach or content. These are the kinds of achievements that media outlets of all sorts love to celebrate, turning every real or imagined accomplishment into an occasion for a party and some enthusiastic self-congratulation.

But Beis Moshiach is not the name of a newspaper, a party organ, or a movement bulletin. Its purpose is not to grow its own influence or to promote any institution, organization, or individual. It is a vehicle for expressing our collective connection to Beis Chayeinu - Beis Moshiach - to the Nasi HaDor, to the Rebbe MH”M. It is a tool for spreading the Rebbe’s primary message. From the first issue to the fifteen-hundredth, the definition has not changed, the mission has not changed, and the goal never will.

That is why reaching issue fifteen hundred is an opportunity that each of us needs to grab hold of. The fact that we mark ‘round’ numbers is not just some common convention - it is something we learned from the Rebbe. Marking anniversaries and milestone issues taps into the power to awaken and inspire, and reflects the understanding that every significant moment carries a lesson - especially one that draws attention.

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1500 ISSUES AND 1 QUESTION:

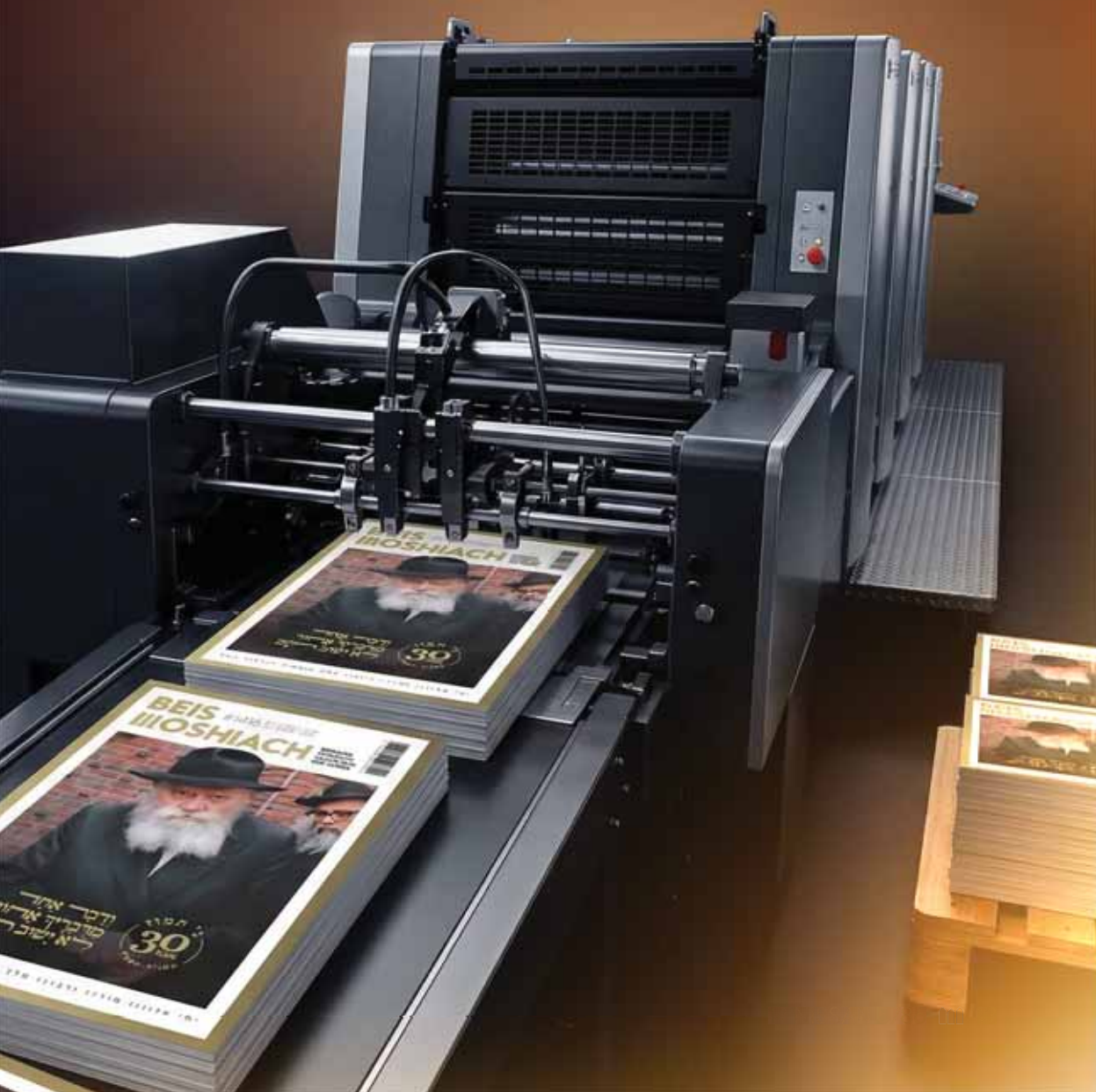
COULD WE PRESENT THIS TO THE REBBE?

THE SPIRITUAL COMPASS OF BEIS MOSHIACH

SHOULD WE WRITE "MELECH HAMOSHIACH" AFTER THE REBBE'S NAME IN EVERY SINGLE ARTICLE? SHOULD CHASSIDIM STILL TRAVEL TO 770 FOR TISHREI AFTER GIMMEL TAMMUZ? SHOULD WE RUN AN AD WITH A ROUNDED MENORAH? FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS, EVERY QUESTION THE EDITORS COULDN'T ANSWER ALONE LANDED ON THE DESK OF BEIS MOSHIACH'S VAAD HARUCHNI — SENIOR CHASSIDIM WHO HAVE SERVED AS THE SPIRITUAL COMPASS OF BEIS MOSHIACH SINCE ITS VERY FIRST ISSUE:

RABBI BEREL LIPSKER · RABBI NACHMAN SCHAPIRO
· RABBI SHLOMA MAJESKI · RABBI ZALMAN LIBEROW

THEY SPEAK ABOUT THE QUESTIONS FACED, THE LINES HELD, AND THE STANDARD THAT HAS NEVER CHANGED — AND ABOUT THE BITTERSWEET FEELING THAT COMES WITH EVERY ISSUE THAT GOES TO PRINT: THAT WE ARE STILL WAITING, STILL PRINTING, STILL HOPING THIS WILL BE THE LAST ISSUE WE EVER NEED TO PUBLISH



The editors of Beis Moshiach do not attempt to compete with other Charedi news-magazines. Its reporters do not focus on sensational stories, and its readers do not buy the magazine to read news from the wider world.

The editors, reporters, and readers have one goal: to awaken and strengthen *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, and the fulfillment of all his directives without exception - especially in inyanei Geula and Moshiach. The entire weekly magazine is focused on this goal, across all its sections - beginning with the cover photo, which will always be a photo of the Rebbe, continuing with Dvar Malchus and Otzar HaMelech which arouse *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe and his directives, the diary of a tamim with the *chayus* of 770, the Chassidische farbrengen and additional thought pieces that fan the flames of emuna, miracle stories illustrating that the Rebbe is alive and present despite the concealment and hiddenness, articles about the shluchim with emphasis on spreading the Besuras HaGeula, and on to in-depth interviews with rabbis and mashpiim who awaken and strengthen emuna in the light of the Rebbe's sichos.

Given this editorial team, these reporters, and these readers - the Vaad HaRuchni [Spiritual Advisory Committee] must also be composed of first-rank Chassidim, well-versed in the Rebbe's sichos and directives, who live and breathe his instructions and activities, and whose entire focus is devoted to bringing about the complete hisgalus in actual practice.

Indeed, alongside the founding of Beis Moshiach, the Vaad was established, comprising five Chassidim: Rabbi Zalman Liberow, the Rebbe's shliach to Flatbush, New York, known for his unique *chayus* in all inyanei Geula and Moshiach; Rabbi Chaim Sholom DovBer (Berel) Lipsker, mashpia at Yeshivas Chovevei Torah and a member of the Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos; Rabbi Shloma Majeski, director of 'Machon l'Yahadus' and

a tremendous expert in the Toras HaGeula, whose lectures have earned a wide reputation throughout the United States; and Rabbi Nachman Schapiro, a member of the Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos and a senior mashpia at Yeshivas Oholei Torah.

In anticipation of the thousandth issue of Beis Moshiach, we gathered the members of the weekly's Vaad for a special discussion on the central principles of Beis Moshiach, the great responsibility borne by the magazine's editors, the test criteria of the Vaad, the magazine's influence on its readers, and the battles of Beis Moshiach against attempts to change its direction after Gimmel Tammuz.

“Yechi Adoneinu” - Not Only on the Cover

One of Beis Moshiach's stated purposes is the publicizing of the identity of Moshiach. This begins with the declaration of “Yechi Adoneinu” appearing regularly on the magazine's cover, continues with articles and columns dealing with this topic intensively, and of course with the repeated mention of the title “the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach” throughout the pages of each issue. All Chabad Chassidim believe that the Rebbe is Moshiach - and yet there are those who ask: why the insistence on noting in nearly every article that the Rebbe is Moshiach? Is this not excessive?

Rabbi Shloma Majeski: As Chassidim, we must engage with special *chayus* in every *inyan* the Rebbe MH'M engages in. In the sichos of recent years, the Rebbe decidedly placed special emphasis on the topic of the identity of Moshiach. Already in the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Tazria-Metzora 5751, the Rebbe spoke at length about how in every generation there were disciples who said of their Rebbes that they were worthy of being Moshiach, and in continuation of this said that “we follow in their path” - that we too must say so - and linked the name of the Rebbe Rayatz to Moshiach.

Subsequently, in the winter of 5752, nearly week after week, the Rebbe was particular to mention that the leader of the generation is the Moshiach of the generation, with additional clear hints that he is Moshiach. To such an extent that in the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim - filled with extraordinary expressions about the Rebbe being Moshiach and having already begun his activities in the world - the Rebbe added a note dealing with the three Chabad Rebbes of recent generations: the Rebbe MH'M, the Rebbe Rayatz, and the Rebbe Rashab, and their connection to the expression often used by the Rebbe regarding the complete Geula that will come immediately - "in which the acronym of 'miyad' alludes to the three eras connected to the Rebbe Rayatz, the leader of our generation, in order of their closeness to us: Moshiach (Menachem is his name), Yosef Yitzchok, DovBer (the Rebbe Rashab's second name)."

This answer applies as well to those who raise another issue that Beis Moshiach elicits: why must we emphasize and repeatedly return to the pure Chassidic belief that the Rebbe is alive and present? The answer is the same: as Chassidim, we must engage with special chayus in every matter the Rebbe MH'M engages in. And after the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz - the Rebbe engaged with a *koch* in the belief that the Rebbe is alive in a physical sense and that the entire matter of the passing is nothing but a *nisayon*. The Rebbe then frequently quoted three Talmudic passages: "Moshe Rabbeinu did



Rabbi Shloma Majeski

not die," "Yaakov Avinu did not die," and the entire story of Rabi Yehuda HaNasi who came to his home every Shabbos, made Kiddush, and discharged his family's obligation of Kiddush. Since we are Chassidim of the Rebbe, we must engage fervently with that which the Rebbe himself engaged in with passion.

Rabbi Zalman Liberow: In practice, this question is asked about the entire issue of publicizing the identity of Moshiach. People argue: "We believe the Rebbe is Moshiach, but why is it so important to publicize and emphasize this?" The answer is simple: if it were not so important - the Rebbe MH'M would not have mentioned it in sichos.

Whoever has studied the Rebbe's sichos knows that in recent years the Rebbe began frequently quoting the words of the Bartenura - that "in every generation one is born from the seed of Yehuda who is worthy of being Moshiach for Israel" - as well as the words of the Chasam Sofer about "one who is worthy by virtue of his righteousness to be the redeemer, and when the time comes, the Almighty will reveal Himself to him and send him." These



Rabbi Nachman Schapiro

citations were not at all common until recent years. But from 5751 onward, it was important to the Rebbe to repeatedly bring these citations. One might say that while the Rebbe did not say the words “I am Melech HaMoshiach,” he gave clear and transparent hints from every possible angle. And if this is important to the Rebbe - it is certainly and certainly important for Chassidim.

Of course, alongside the insistence on mentioning the full title “the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach” and declaring “Yechi Adoneinu” at every appropriate opportunity - one must work on an inner conduct that expresses our bittul to the Rebbe MH’M. But the claim that one should focus only on inner work and there is no need for external declaration and emphasis is like saying one should only arouse love and awe and there is no need to recite the words of davening. Just as tefilla without *kavana* is like a body without a soul, concentrating on Yechi without practical expression in daily life is like a body without a soul. Clearly, both are needed!

Rabbi Nachman Schapiro: Continuing from the citations of the Bartenura and the Chasam Sofer, the Rebbe mentioned several times that Chassidim in their generation believed that their Rebbe was Melech HaMoshiach, and in our generation - the Rebbe Rayatz. In recent years the Rebbe also frequently attached the title “Moshiach Tzidkeinu” to “Nesi Doreinu,” and many times we could hear the Rebbe say “the leader of our generation, the Moshiach of our generation” and similar expressions. The Rebbe

mentioned this both verbally and in writing - as in the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Vayeitzei 5752, where after quoting the Bartenura and the Chasam Sofer, the Rebbe added in his holy handwriting: “And in our generation, the leader of our generation, the Rebbe Rayatz.”

And since “a person is obligated to speak in the language of his teacher [*b’leshon Rabo*] - it is clear that there is a special purpose in mentioning that the Rebbe is Melech HaMoshiach.

In those same years the Rebbe also explained several times the greatness of Moshiach - that he is the general *yechida* (and later added that he is the very essence of the soul). Whoever examines the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5752 will see that the Rebbe speaks of a new kind of avoda, stemming from the fact that Moshiach’s essence is the very essence of the soul, the essence of Israel that transcends the level of *yechida*.

This means that the knowledge that Moshiach is the very essence of the soul is something that touches upon the entire

service - in every detail of a person's avoda - since everything is done "to bring the Days of Moshiach."

When the whole issue of *kabbolas ha'malchus* began, I sat at the Kinus HaShluchim with some of the senior shluchim, and one of them said: we already wrote a letter of *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe in 5710 - why do we need to accept his *malchus* again? I replied: (a) Most of those sitting around this table weren't even born in 5710, and those who were were small children - so you have never actually signed a letter of commitment to the Rebbe. (b) Since a new dimension of the Rebbe has been revealed, the commitment one signed at the time is insufficient today. We must connect also to this newly revealed dimension of the Rebbe.

Rabbi Chaim Sholom DovBer Lipsker:

Before all the explanations and interpretations, one simple thing must be said: this is the truth! Since the reality is that the Rebbe is Melech HaMoshiach, therefore we must write it - because it is the truth.

This question was already asked in 5751, when the *koch* began around *kabbolas ha'malchus* of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach. Those who opposed using the title "Melech HaMoshiach" for the Rebbe tried to present their position in a "Chassidic" light and quoted our Rebbeim that for a Chassid there is nothing above the Rebbe. As in the well-known story of the Chassid who was asked if his Rebbe had *ruach ha'kodesh*. The Chassid replied that this was not his concern. If the Rebbe needs to have *ruach ha'kodesh*, he surely has it; and if he doesn't need it - it doesn't bother me that he doesn't have it. This expresses the idea that for a Chassid, the Rebbe is not measured by this or that virtue. The greatest virtue is the very fact of being a Rebbe.

To be honest, I initially had no logical answer to this question. I only knew that if it was important to the Rebbe to mention that the leader of our generation is the Moshiach of our generation - there is certainly great significance in this, and as Chassidim we must adopt the

Rebbe's own formulation when referring to the Rebbe himself.

But on Shabbos Parshas Toldos, the Rebbe began one of the sichos at the farbrengen with the words: "Something must be added and corrected," and explained that the level of Melech HaMoshiach is not merely the general *yechida* of the souls of Israel, since *yechida* is only one of the five names called to the very essence of the soul. The special quality of Melech HaMoshiach is that he reveals "the very essence of the soul itself." And this is "the true nature of Moshiach."

This was an enormous *chiddush*. Until then it was known that Moshiach is the general *yechida*, and from that standpoint there was room to argue that 'Moshiach' holds no advantage over 'Rebbe' - since the Rebbe is also the general *yechida*, so what more does one need beyond a Rebbe?

But after the Rebbe established that Moshiach is "the very essence of Yisrael transcending the level of *yechida*" - it is clear that Melech HaMoshiach has a great and wondrous quality. And since the reality is that the Rebbe is also Melech HaMoshiach - meaning he reveals the very essence of the soul - it is certainly important to mention this again and again, since in doing so one awakens and reveals this.

It is interesting to note the language of the Medrash: "And He called [Vayikra] to Moshe. What is written before this in the passage of the Mishkan? - 'As Hashem commanded Moshe.' A mashal of a king who commanded his servant, saying: Build me a palace! For every thing he built, he would write upon it the king's name. He built walls and wrote upon them the king's name. He erected pillars and wrote upon them the king's name. He laid ceiling beams and wrote upon them the king's name.

"In time, the king entered the palace; everywhere he looked he found his name written. He said: All this honor has my servant done for me - and I am inside while he is outside?! Call him to enter before me into the

inner chamber. So too when the Holy One Blessed Be He told Moshe: Make me a Mishkan - for every thing Moshe made, he would write: 'As Hashem commanded Moshe.' The Holy One Blessed Be He said: All this honor has Moshe done for me - and I am inside while he is outside?! Call him to enter before me, as it is written: 'And He called to Moshe.'" The lesson is understood!

Rabbi Liberow: It is important to emphasize that in Elul 5753, the Rebbe agreed for the first time that in the preface of Kehot publications, the words "Melech HaMoshiach" would be added to his title - and since then, dozens of Kehot works have been printed with the Rebbe's title in the preface as "the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach shlita." After the Rebbe gave his consent to write "Melech HaMoshiach" in an official Lubavitch publication, someone who asks why this is important resembles the person who after Yud Shevat 5711, when the Rebbe agreed to be addressed as "the Rebbe shlita," would have asked what is the importance of writing this title for the Rebbe...

Rabbi Schapiro: In Kesser Shem Tov, in the famous letter describing the Baal Shem Tov's encounter with Melech HaMoshiach, it is written that Moshiach also told the Baal Shem Tov that his revelation would come when "your nature will become revealed in the world." This means that alongside spreading the wellsprings, there is an additional matter: to reveal the nature of the leader of the generation in the world. And this is accomplished when one publicizes the Rebbe's identity as Melech HaMoshiach - thereby revealing the Rebbe's 'nature' in the world.

This should be a simple matter for every Chassid. After all, Chassidim have always been careful to tell everyone about the Rebbe. Everyone agrees about this - that the Rebbe should be publicized as much as possible. But why, one might ask? What does it matter to us that people know who the Rebbe is? When did the Rebbe charge us with this task? And yet all Chabad Chassidim perform this task, and with joy.

For the Rebbe's *inyan* to be complete within us, it must be so in the entire world. And the more we act in the matter of "your nature will become revealed in the world" and connecting more and more Jews to the Rebbe - we are in effect acting within ourselves, so that we become more connected to the Rebbe.

Combining 'Lights of Tohu' with 'Vessels of Tikkun' Demands Heavy Responsibility

Throughout the conversation, the members of the Vaad Ruchni emphasize the heavy responsibility resting upon the shoulders of the magazine's editors - and of course upon the members of the Vaad themselves. When halachic questions arise, the question is directed to the Beis Din of Crown Heights; but when it comes to the Chassidic level, the matter comes to the doorstep of the members of the Vaad.

Rabbi Liberow: In the sicha of Chof-Ches Nissan 5751, in which the Rebbe instructed us to do everything in our power to bring Moshiach Tzidkeinu in actual practice, the Rebbe clarified that our actions must combine "lights of tohu" with "vessels of tikkun." With these words one can essentially summarize the heavy responsibility placed on us as members of the spiritual Vaad:

One could focus exclusively on "vessels of tikkun" - and then there aren't many dilemmas. Anything that appears somewhat like "lights of tohu" is simply removed from the agenda. On the other hand, one could focus on "lights of tohu" and write about every "tohu-like" idea that someone decided might hasten the revelation. Had Beis Moshiach chosen one of these options, life would have been easy for both the editors and the members of the Vaad...

But since the Rebbe commanded us to combine the "lights of tohu" with "vessels of tikkun," we cannot ignore activity that appears "tohu-like," nor can we report and deal only with "tikkun" ideas. This creates

a very complex reality, and questions frequently arrive at our door about whether and how to cover this or that idea - and we must carefully weigh the balance between “lights of tohu” and “vessels of tikkun” and decide accordingly.

In practice, the primary responsibility for this rests with the working editors, since as an advisory committee we convened several times and charted the general guidelines of Beis Moshiach. So not every such question reaches us. But periodically there are activities that sit on the borderline between “lights of tohu” and “vessels of tikkun,” and then they come to us for a ruling.

Rabbi Majeski: Take for example the issue of writing to the Rebbe after Gimmel Tammuz, and the responses the Rebbe provides through the Igros Kodesh. When stories began arriving at the Beis Moshiach editorial office about people who wrote to the Rebbe, inserted their letter between the pages of the Igros Kodesh, and received answers - there were those who had difficulty accepting such practice, arguing that it has no precedent and that one cannot invent new ways of *hiskashrus*.

We examined the matter in depth, and it became clear that beyond the fact that Chassidim in earlier generations practiced something similar - when they had no way to send a letter to the Rebbe, they would insert it between the pages of the Tanya or a sefer of the Rebbe’s maamarim - the Rebbe’s own Torah contains fairly detailed references to this subject:

On Yud-Tes Kislev 5715, the Rebbe related about the Baal Shem Tov and the tzaddikim



Rabbi Zalman Liberow

who followed him, “that it would happen that when they were asked something, they would sometimes open a sefer and say what would be - and the explanation is that the matter being asked has its root as it exists in the Torah, and thereby the tzaddikim knew from the Torah all the particulars as they existed in the world, and it is explained in the later authorities that this is not a matter of divination and is permitted.”

And if the above applies to tzaddikim, there is also a reference from the Rebbe for people of our stature. Thus it appears in Heichal Menachem (Vol. 2, p. 217) that in response to a question about various marriage proposals, the Rebbe replied: “There are those who have the practice of opening a Chumash or Tehillim, and from the first pasuk that presents itself *al pi din* they derive what to do.”

On Shabbos Parshas Noach 5749 the Rebbe spoke about this practice as something relevant to everyone: “We find a source for this practice - to search in the Torah for guidance on how to act in practice - in the stories of our Sages (Chagiga 16a, Gittin 56a, 68a, Chulin 95b, and elsewhere) about Tannaim and Amoraim who



Rabbi Chaim Sholom DovBer Lipsker

encountered a child and said to him ‘recite your verse for me,’ and based on this decided how to act in practice... and as is well known, the custom of many among Israel - including great Torah leaders, ordinary people, and women alike - that before performing a certain action they open a ‘sefer kodesh’ and look at where it opens and where their eyes first fall, and based on this decide in practice.”

Moreover, the Rebbe said in the sicha of 15 Shevat 5748, that answers to questions regarding avodas Hashem can be found in the Torah of the leader of the generation, and there in note 62 the Rebbe adds and innovates “that even in matters of *reshus* (optional conduct) there are instructions in the Chassidic Torah of the leader of the generation.”

After examining the above sources and additional ones, it was clear that this is a practice with a well-grounded basis. However, at the same time, it was necessary to qualify matters and clarify that - as in the past - writing to the Rebbe cannot serve as a substitute for the explicit instructions and guidance that the Rebbe established (in the sicha of 21 Adar

5748, Hisvaduyos Vol. 2, p. 429, and elsewhere):

“Regarding questions in *inyanei* avodas Hashem, Torah and its mitzvos - one should ask the rabbinic authority (*moreh horaah*) or Beis Din in one’s city, including the instruction of the Mishna to ‘make for yourself a teacher.’ Regarding questions seeking advice in matters of livelihood and the like - ‘salvation comes through many advisors,’ to consult with knowledgeable friends. And regarding questions of medicine - ‘you shall guard your lives,’ to conduct oneself in a way

that prevents illness from occurring in the first place, including in cases of need, following the guidance of an expert physician... and best of all - a physician who is also a friend, and in special cases, ‘salvation comes through many advisors,’ two expert physicians, and where there are differences of opinion - according to the majority view.”

[It sometimes happens that the question was brought before the appropriate authority according to the Rebbe’s instructions - for example, when a spiritual question was referred to a mashpia, and the mashpia cannot reach a decision. In such cases the mashpia directs the questioner to write to the Rebbe and request his response.]

An additional qualification also mentioned in the Rebbe’s sichos is that the question via opening ‘sifrei kodesh’ is only when “one wishes to clarify how to act in matters of *reshus* (a matter in which Torah has not specified clearly to do this or that)” (Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar 5749, Hisvaduyos Vol. 3, p. 224). Or in other words: “One key point

must be clarified: searching for signs in the Torah regarding practical conduct - is only in matters where there is room for doubt, and more broadly in matters of *reshus*... in which there is a need to search the 'heavens' (Torah) for a 'sign' as to how conduct should be in practice; but in a matter that one knows with certainty must be done according to Torah - there is no need to search for signs, and it is certainly not permissible to delay doing the thing because of some sign" (Shabbos Parshas Noach, Hisvaduyos 5749 Vol. 1, p. 310).

Of course, all these limitations apply when dealing with a question of whether to do this or that - but even when, following the Rebbe's instructions, one consults a physician and so on, it is important to simultaneously request the Rebbe's blessing for success in the matter. Thus, in that same sicha in which the Rebbe set out the aforementioned limitations, he concluded: "Regarding requests for blessings, pidyonos, etc. - we inform again that in such matters there is a *chazaka* that with Hashem's help these requests will continue to be fulfilled."

One further important clarification: since sometimes different interpretations can be derived from the Rebbe's responses - it is appropriate in every case not to rely on one's personal interpretation alone, but to present the matter before a mashpia, a rabbinic authority, a friend, and so on - as instructed by the Rebbe in the above sichos and in the sicha of 2 Adar 5748. As the Rebbe said in the sicha of 15 Shevat 5748: when one has difficulty understanding the Rebbe's words - "the rav will help him find the correct answer and advice, without the 'bias' of self-love."

The Litmus Test - To Publish or Not to Publish

Beis Moshiach was fortunate that all members of its Vaad Ruchni are thoroughly versed in the teachings of the Rebbe MH"M and his directives throughout the years. Thus when a dilemma arises, the Vaad members

almost always recall a similar episode the Rebbe addressed, from which the Rebbe's view on the matter can be derived.

What happens when a novel dilemma reaches you, and you cannot find the Rebbe's treatment of a comparable case in his sichos and directives - what is your "litmus test" for deciding whether to publish or not?

Rabbi Majeski: Over the course of decades we merited hearing sichos and directives from the Rebbe. By virtue of the roles we filled over the years, the members of the Vaad were also exposed to hundreds of the Rebbe's responses on almost every subject - so that even if there is no direct treatment by the Rebbe of the topic in question, usually one of us will recall the Rebbe's treatment of a similar case, and we decide accordingly. In rarer cases, we must think - in the light of all we merited hearing and seeing from the Rebbe - what the Rebbe would have answered to such a question. In such cases we of course pray and request the Rebbe's bracha that we merit to align with the truth and the Divine will.

Rabbi Shalom Yaakov Chazan, the magazine's editor and the liaison between the magazine's editors and the Vaad - says: The litmus test is: Could we bring this edition to the Rebbe? Sometimes the questions involved are not simply black or white but when one activates one's Chassidic sensitivity and reflects on whether one would bring such an article, or such an advertisement, to the Rebbe - one can arrive at a clear answer.

Here's an example of such a dilemma: Regarding the menorah of the Beis HaMikdash, the Rebbe ruled unequivocally (in accordance with the Rambam) that it had diagonal branches. Regarding Chanuka menorahs, the Rebbe did not say that one must change to diagonal branches, but expressed in Likkutei Sichos (Vol. 21, p. 168) that "it is worthwhile to make the branches diagonally."

What should we do when an advertising agency sends an advertisement with a rounded menorah? On one hand, the Rebbe did not

prohibit this, since the Rebbe spoke primarily about the Menorah of the Mikdash. On the other hand, it is certainly the Rebbe's wish that Chanuka menorahs also have diagonal branches. In light of the above litmus test, we concluded that when a rounded menorah appears in an ad, it is inappropriate - and we will inform the advertising agency that they must either change the ad, or we will forgo it, even if we lose out financially.

The Magazine Influences the Conduct of Its Readers

Over the years, Beis Moshiach was compelled to wage battles around several issues when certain forces tried to weaken the fire of faith and activity in inyanei Geula and Moshiach. But not only that - even in other areas not directly connected to inyanei Geula and Moshiach, Beis Moshiach fought and again and again brought the Rebbe's view on the matter, until the message filtered into the consciousness of all Chabad Chassidim, and today these issues have again become accepted by the entire Chabad community.

For example: the trip to the Rebbe for Tishrei - which was a foundation of Chassidic practice for generations, and reached its peak in our era - stood in danger after Gimmel Tammuz. Some believed that under current circumstances, when the Rebbe is not seen with physical eyes, the entire journey for Tishrei should be canceled, and instead the focus should be on traveling to one's place of shlichus and so on. They also sought to cancel the Kevutza year travel for the same reason.

Beis Moshiach stood as an unbreakable wall against all attempts to change even the slightest thing in the ways of *hiskashrus* and Chassidus - publishing thought pieces, interviews, and columns on the importance of traveling to the Rebbe. It was a fierce battle over the conduct and *hiskashrus* of Chabad Chassidim to the Rebbe MH'M. On one side stood those who believed that after Gimmel Tammuz there is a change and consequently the practices

must change - and on the other side Beis Moshiach stood as an unbreakable wall with an unequivocal declaration: the concealment and hiddenness is nothing but a *nisayon*, and since there is no change in the Rebbe's eternal life - nothing in the practices of connection to the Rebbe MH'M may be changed in the slightest!

Boruch Hashem, the battle succeeded, and Chabad Chassidim in general - and the tmimim in particular - voted with their feet and began coming in their multitudes to Tishrei with the Rebbe, as well as to the Kevutza year. The position Beis Moshiach presented - rooted in the Rebbe's sichos and letters - was accepted by all Chabad Chassidim, who in recent years come in multitudes to 770, as do all tmimim without exception, who come for their Kevutza year. So much so that even those forces who in the early years ignored 770, themselves now encourage the trip to the Rebbe and the stay at Beis Chayeinu.

At our meeting with the members of the Vaad, I asked:

In your view, what is the secret of *Beis Moshiach's* success?

Rabbi Majeski: When one engages with *chayus* in inyanei Geula and Moshiach, when one believes that the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach is alive and present - this naturally awakens *chayus* in all *inyanim* of the Rebbe, since we are not speaking of directives from the distant past, but the directives of a Rebbe who is alive and present, who guides with all his directives today as well, and continues to demand all the practices today as well.

One can see tangibly that the belief that the Rebbe is alive and present influences action in practice. In the Rebbe's sichos from 5710, the Rebbe speaks several times about the difference between those who believe the Rebbe is with us physically and those who think there was a passing - and the difference manifests in two ways:

1) Whoever believes the Rebbe is alive - the Rebbe channels all divine influence to him as

a living Rebbe physically present with him; while one who does not believe this and thinks the passing was literal - the Rebbe channels influence to him as one who is above and he below...

2) Among those who believe the Rebbe is alive there are no changes in the avoda of shlichus, whereas among those with weakness in their belief that the Rebbe is alive there is also weakness in the Rebbe's shlichus work - because when one does not believe the Rebbe is alive, arguments and ideas and reasons begin to arise for not fulfilling the Rebbe's instructions, with the claim that since there is a change in the Rebbe himself, there is room to say his directives are no longer relevant today, and since the Rebbe is not here, *chv*, to say whether one should continue - "sit and do nothing" seems preferable.

Today one can see tangibly: those who believe and live with the faith that the Rebbe is alive and present - their *avodas ha'shlichus* has not changed and has not weakened; on the contrary, it grows stronger from day to day.

These two points are relevant not only for Chabad Chassidim, but for every Jew. When a Jew hears that the Rebbe says one must prepare for the coming of Moshiach - if he hears that the Rebbe is alive, the instruction is received by him as a current instruction. And when he fulfills the Rebbe's instructions with the belief that the Rebbe is alive and present - just as water reflects a face back to its source - he receives the Rebbe's brachos and counsel in wondrous ways, as is known and widely testified.

Rabbi Schapiro: Thirty years ago, we sat at a farbrengen with one of the greatest mashpiim, and he said that if we truly believed that the Rebbe is Melech HaMoshiach and we stand within his *dalet amos* - we would look entirely different. Our entire conduct, our entire approach to the Rebbe's *inyanim*, would be completely different. At the time, this statement had a very strong impact on us.

When a person reads again and again the formulation "the Rebbe MH'M," this should arouse him to conduct himself as befits a Chassid of "Melech HaMoshiach" - in keeping with the Rebbe's words at the end of the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Vaaira 5752: "The knowledge that the Rebbe Rayatz, the leader of our generation, is imminently walking in (since 'those who dwell in the dust will awaken and sing') and is looking at each of the Chassidim and *mekusharim* to examine their standing and situation - this arouses and effects the completion (also in the sense of wholeness) of all our deeds and service." - Similarly, when a Chassid has it firmly in mind that the Rebbe is Melech HaMoshiach, and he believes and anticipates the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach's revelation at every moment - this affects him both in the faith and anticipation of Moshiach in general (which becomes more tangible) and in his own standing and state in all aspects of avodas Hashem (where everything is done in the mode of "stand ready, all of you"). One feels that one stands before the Melech HaMoshiach!

Rabbi Lipsker: Usually when speaking about the virtue of declaring Yechi, one cites the Rebbe's words about the addition to the king's life and so on - but one must not forget the most basic significance of declaring Yechi HaMelech ("Long live the King"): that the people are accepting the *malchus* of the King!

The same applies when writing "the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach" - this is an expression of *kabbolas ha'malchus*; and when a Chassid reads this or writes it, and he pauses for a moment and thinks about the significance of the matter, he understands that he must accept the *malchus* of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach. And since the most fundamental aspect of accepting kingship is "accept my decrees," this generates special reinforcement in fulfilling all the directives of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach.

(This interview was originally conducted in honor of publication of Issue #500)

JEW'S DON'T

RUN!



WHEN APARTHEID ENDED AND JEWS WERE FLEEING SOUTH AFRICA IN DROVES, THE REBBE SAID TO STAY. PEOPLE CALLED IT RECKLESS. **RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN** — SENIOR SHLIACH AND RABBI EMERITUS OF JOHANNESBURG'S PRESTIGIOUS SYDENHAM SHUL — STAYED. AND HE WATCHED A COMMUNITY FLOURISH. HE CALLS IT PROPHECY. NOW, DECADES LATER, HE HAS A DIRECT MESSAGE FOR JEWS LIVING IN UNSTABLE COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD

PREPARED FOR PRINT BY LEVI LIBEROW

It's always a risk to invite a pulpit rabbi to speak. They can go on and on.

In my shul in Johannesburg, there was a congregant named Mr. Berkowitz who fell asleep during every single sermon. Once, I got up to the bima and, before I had even opened the Chumash, there was Mr. Berkowitz - already asleep. I said, "Mr. Berkowitz! I haven't started yet." He opened one eye and said, "Rabbi, I trust you."

A Wrestling Match and a Message

Either way, you can't keep a pulpit rabbi away from the parsha. And this week's parsha [Vayishlach] speaks directly to our moment.

One of the most dramatic scenes in the entire Torah is Yaakov's wrestling match with the *Sar shel Eisav* - the angel of his brother Eisav. The Rashbam, a grandson of Rashi, offers a striking explanation for why Hashem arranged this painful, all-night encounter: Yaakov had developed a habit of running away.

He fled home when Eisav threatened to kill him. He fled from Lavan. And now, with Eisav marching toward him with four hundred armed men, Yaakov was contemplating escape again.

The Rashbam says Hashem declared: Enough. Stand your ground. Confront the challenge. Deal with it. Don't run away.

That message flows directly into the anxieties of Jews today - in New York and across the world.

Recently, when I gave this lecture at another New York community, a man told me he was planning to leave New York. His reason? He was unhappy with the newly elected mayor. I asked him where he planned to go. He wasn't sure. And so I asked a harder question: What happens when the next place also elects someone you don't like? Will running become a way of life?

Consider what we're talking about. New York is the largest Jewish city in the world - more Jews than any city in Eretz Yisrael. Even its secular culture has a distinctly Jewish character. I once circled Manhattan looking for parking and found an official municipal sign that didn't just say "No Parking." It said: "Don't even think of parking here." That's a Jewish city.

That this great Jewish city should vote the way it did, is, frankly, extraordinary. But the question is: what do we do about it?

The Rebbe's Consistent Answer: Stay

Living Torah recently released a short film in which the Rebbe is seen speaking to people from communities across the world facing security crises - Morocco, Tunisia, Guatemala, Quebec after the French separatists took power, South Africa, Eretz Yisrael during the Lebanon War. In each case, the Rebbe's answer was the same: Don't worry. Stay where you are. Help bring Moshiach from right where you stand.

But this was never a reflexive policy. The Rebbe's guidance was always measured, prophetic, and specific.

During the Holocaust, the Rebbe Rayatz told Jews to leave Europe - the tragedy was that almost no country would let them in. My own father, **Rabbi Shimon Goldman a'h** - the only survivor of his entire family from Poland, who for decades ran a butcher shop on Coney Island Avenue - escaped on a Sugihara visa. Chiune Sugihara was the Japanese consul general in Kovna who defied his own government and issued visas to over six thousand Jewish refugees, saving the Mir Yeshiva and the entire Lubavitch Yeshiva of Vilna.

Another example: When the Shah fell in Iran and the ayatollahs seized power, the Rebbe encouraged and assisted Jews to flee. "Get out," he said - and helped them do it. When a shliach was preparing to go to Zimbabwe, the Rebbe, who had expressed calm confidence about South Africa as we shall soon see, gave

a very different answer about Zimbabwe: “The situation is unclear.” The plans were halted. Today, barely a handful of Jews remain in that country.

The Rebbe’s guidance was never off-the-cuff. When he told people to stay - it was a considered, visionary judgment.

Crown Heights: A Neighborhood Saved

Let’s take a local Brooklyn neighborhood as a case study - the Rebbe’s very own Crown Heights:

I was born on Eastern Parkway - literally. At the Brooklyn Women’s Hospital, on Eastern Parkway near Rochester Avenue. I grew up in Crown Heights when it was a thriving neighborhood, home to every stream of Judaism.

The block we lived on - bounded by Montgomery and Crown Streets, crossed by Brooklyn and Kingston Avenues - had over a dozen shuls. On the way to davening, you would see person after person rolling up a sleeve for tefillin. Many of those arms bore a tattooed number.

Then the neighborhood began to change. Through the practice known as “blockbusting” real estate interests deliberately brought non-Jewish residents into the area. Jews panicked. Satmar, Bobov, and many other Chassidic groups fled to Boro Park and Flatbush and elsewhere. Crown Heights was emptying.

Until 1969 - when the Rebbe made an official announcement: “The Rebbe [Rayatz] bought 770 here. We are not going anywhere. We are staying right here.”

The flight stopped. The neighborhood stabilized.

The Rebbe went further. He issued a *psak halacha* - something he almost never did, ordinarily referring questions to local *poskim*. He ruled, in a halachic essay published in a leading New York-based Torah Journal, that it is halachically forbidden to leave Crown

Heights, because doing so endangers those who remain. The more Jews who leave, the more vulnerable the community becomes. You bear responsibility to your neighbors not to abandon them.

The great Rav Moshe Feinstein - one of the greatest *poskim* of his generation, who often deferred to the Rebbe - publicly endorsed the Rebbe’s declaration afterward: “If the Lubavitcher Rebbe had not given that *psak*, I would have given it myself.”

Today Crown Heights is a remarkable model of peaceful racial integration, nearly unique in America. Shuls and schools are thriving. Kosher restaurants number in the tens. Property values have risen so dramatically that affordable housing has become the community’s next challenge - a very different kind of problem.

South Africa: “You’re Meshuga for Coming Here”

South Africa, which I proudly call home, is another case study: In 1976, my wife and I arrived in Johannesburg - with two small children - to open the first Chabad House on the African continent. The Jewish community’s reaction was uniform: “You’re meshuga, you are crazy. We’re all leaving. There’s going to be a revolution.”

They had reason to believe it. Across the continent - Congo, Kenya, Zambia - violent revolutions had overthrown colonial governments. Blood had been spilled in the streets. South Africa seemed next.

But the Rebbe sent shluchim. And the Rebbe did not send shluchim into danger.

The anxiety in the community was not new. When the Nationalist Party won the 1948 election and introduced apartheid, a prominent rav serving as dayan in Johannesburg - a *landsman* of my family - traveled to New York to ask the Rebbe Rayatz: should he take his family and leave? The Rebbe was completely dismissive. Everything would be fine. The rav



Rabbi Goldman and Rabbi Lipskar, shluchim to South Africa with Nelson Mandela

went back - and for South African Jewry, it was.

Throughout the '70s and '80s, so many families were emigrating that our community was being decimated. During this period, the Rebbe sent his students to South Africa as shluchim - a massive vote of confidence. His personal responses to the community's fears were equally unambiguous. He told people not to be afraid and to carry on with their work. Some were even advised to return after they had already left.

On three separate occasions, Chabad leaders in South Africa were under intense pressure from the community, clamoring to know whether the Rebbe was still confident about their future. One of these moments came in August 1985, when President P.W. Botha delivered his infamous Rubicon speech in Durban - a moment of acute national crisis. Each time, without hesitation, the Rebbe gave the same two-word Hebrew answer: "*L'pele*

ha'sheilah! - It is astounding that you even ask the question!"

His reassurances spread across the country like wildfire. "The Rebbe" became a household name in South Africa. Even non-observant Jews knew his bracha. I have heard people say, "Don't worry - I'll close the lights at Jan Smuts Airport. I'll be the last one to leave." Such was the confidence the Rebbe inspired.

The Day Mandela Was Released

On February 11, 1990, President F.W. de Klerk announced the release of Nelson Mandela after twenty-seven years in prison. The anxiety in the white community was palatable. What would a man do after twenty-seven years of imprisonment? The demographic ratio was eight to one. Revenge seemed almost inevitable.

The very day Mandela walked free, **Rabbi Koppel Bacher** - a prominent Chabad leader in South Africa - was in New York standing in line for Sunday dollars. After receiving a dollar



Torah Academy - Chabad-Lubavitch institutions in South Africa

and a bracha, he turned to leave. The Rebbe called him back.

“Tell the Jews in South Africa who are worried,” the Rebbe said: “It will be good there until Moshiach - and after Moshiach, it will be even better.”

Those eleven words sustained an entire community. Not just Chabad families - the entire South African Jewish world knew the Rebbe’s bracha. It was repeated in shuls and living rooms, by the frum and the non-observant alike. The Rebbe was not predicting political stability in some abstract sense. He was speaking of Moshiach - promising that South Africa would remain a home for Jews until the ultimate Geula, and that the Geula itself would make everything better still.

“It will be good there until Moshiach - and after Moshiach, it will be even better.” - The Rebbe

Mandela: Blessing, Not a Curse

Mandela’s release was not the catastrophe people feared - it was a blessing. He proved to

be, in the most literal sense, a leader sent to save his nation. Like a Moses, his stature was such that he could lead his people toward a destination they did not entirely choose for themselves.

He could have demanded revenge. Young members of his party were clamoring for it. He had to fight his own people to bring them toward peace and reconciliation - the mantra of his life. Had he been a man of lesser standing, he would have been outvoted. But because he had sacrificed twenty-seven years, because his moral authority was unassailable, he prevailed.

What followed was what the world’s media - a press that rarely uses the word - called a miraculous transition to democracy. South Africa held its first election in which black and white could vote together. I stood in that line. People looked at each other and said: This is *ikvesa d’Meshicha*. This is what Moshiach’s times feel like.

As an act of reconciliation, Mandela appointed de Klerk - the leader of a government

that had kept him imprisoned - as one of his deputy presidents. He did not have to. It was a gesture of almost incomprehensible magnanimity.

Regarding Israel, Mandela said something that no Arab leader and no ANC politician says today: "Israel deserves to exist in secure borders." When we were upset to see a famous photograph of Mandela embracing Arafat, *yemach shemo*, that statement was his answer.

I met Mandela on a number of occasions. There was a dinner in Cape Town honoring Chief Rabbi Harris, whom Mandela held in the highest regard. Once, on a Sunday afternoon, I spotted Mandela walking near my house - he lived not far away. I quickly brought my children outside. He stopped for each one. "What's your name? Which school do you go to?" "Torah Academy." "What's your name?" "Israel." "Oh - I'm going to Israel soon with the Chief Rabbi." He walked an entire block holding my small children's hands.

I cannot think of a president of any country who would do that. He was a special personality. He saved South Africa. And the Rebbe had seen it coming.

Crime, Hijackings, and the Rebbe's Bracha

After democracy came a new wave of emigration - driven not by political fear but by the country's soaring crime rate. Many of my congregants became victims. I myself was hijacked - ironically, while driving to the *shiva* house of a man who had been murdered. My wife Rochel's experience was far more dramatic. A would-be hijacker pulled the trigger at point-blank range. Nothing happened. He pulled it again. Nothing happened. Twice. A miracle.

People asked: How can any person, sitting on the other side of the world, tell a community not to leave a danger zone like this? My answer was always the same: **to make such a statement, to take such responsibility upon yourself,**

you either have to be a fool or a prophet. One thing is certain: the Lubavitcher Rebbe was no fool.

The Rebbe himself, it is said, commented in his later years that while he had not been as successful as he would have liked in stemming emigration from South Africa altogether, he was gratified that he had succeeded sufficiently for the community to survive - with stability, with vibrancy, and with the Geula still ahead.

A Community That Stayed – and Thrived

South African Jewry today numbers perhaps sixty thousand - about half the peak of one hundred twenty thousand in the 1960s. The quantity is down. The quality, however, is extraordinary.

South Africa is, by any honest measure, the most traditionally observant Jewish community in the Diaspora. Not all frum - but deeply, authentically Jewish. Forty percent of South African Jews buy only kosher meat. Forty-one percent attend shul weekly - including non-religious Jews. Over ninety percent fast on Yom Kippur. Over ninety percent attend the Pesach Seder. Over ninety percent send their children to Jewish day schools. These numbers do not exist anywhere else in the Jewish world. The Rebbe knew this - and told the community's skeptical establishment as much.

When we purchased the Torah Academy's property in 1979, the five major Jewish establishment organizations came to our door demanding we stop. South African Jewry was "in decline," they said. There weren't enough children or resources to support another stream of education. When we proceeded anyway, they wrote directly to the Rebbe - co-signed by the chairmen of the Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation - asking him to, and I quote, "curb the reckless empire building of his errant emissaries."

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MINUTED FOR THE MOMENT

MOST JEWS KNOW THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE IN MOSHIACH. **RABBI YOSEF YITZCHOK KELLER**, INSPIRED BY A FATEFUL PERSONAL INSTRUCTION FROM THE REBBE, ASKED A DIFFERENT QUESTION: WHAT WILL YOU NEED IN YOUR POCKET THE MORNING HE ACTUALLY ARRIVES? THE ANSWER SENT HIM ON A THIRTY-FIVE-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH HIDDEN MANUSCRIPTS, FORGOTTEN HALACHOS AND SILVER MINTS — TO PRODUCE A COIN THAT TURNS "I BELIEVE" INTO "I AM READY"

AVROHOM RAINITZ





Through the lens of the camera that documented the dollar distribution at the Rebbe on that Sunday in the summer of 5751, it looked like just another seemingly routine moment in the dollar distribution. The long line moved at its familiar rapid pace, faces changed quickly, and the Rebbe distributed the bills with his holy hand *l'vracha v'hatzlacha*. But for the young tamim standing there, R' Yosef Yitzchok Keller, time stood still.

The tamim presented the Rebbe with his newly published book: "Hilchos Beis HaBechira l' Rambam al pi Kisvei Yad." The Rebbe accepted the book, gave a dollar with the blessing "*hatzlacha raba*," and then extended an additional bill. "And this is for the sefer," said the Rebbe, "one must pay" ("*un dos iz far'n sefer, darf men tzullen*").

But then, just as Keller thought the exchange had ended and began to step away, he suddenly heard the Rebbe continuing to speak to him. He turned back, and heard the following words - not a wish, but a life directive: "*In gichen vet men darfen trachten dinim fun kiddush haChodesh al pi ha'reiyah*" ("Very soon we will need to consider the laws of sanctifying the new month by visual observation"), said the Rebbe, his holy eyes gazing toward the Geula reality about to unfold at any moment.

The Rebbe continued to explain that currently this is impossible in the absence of a *semicha*-ordained Beis Din, but then turned to the author's father, R' Yehuda Keller *a'h*, and pointed to his son:

"Zol er zen zich tzugreiten, zol er kenen paskenen gleich di sheilos" - "He should see to prepare himself, so that he can rule immediately on these questions."

The message was sharp: the Geula is not an abstract idea or a distant future. It is *here and now*. The Rebbe was not merely asking him to study Torah for the sake of knowledge, but to prepare the practical "keilim" for halachic

ruling that would be required *immediately* - the moment Moshiach is revealed.

• • •

A Familiar Figure at "Our Home"

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Keller was well known to the residents of "Beis Chayeinu" in those years. A scion of a distinguished Chassidic family - grandson of Reb Meir Lieber Keller, who served as the first secretary of the Rebbe at the Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch and Machne Israel, and of Reb Yisrael Yehuda Levin, among the first residents of Kfar Chabad; and son of Reb Yehuda Keller, a gifted orator and author - he was known at 770 as a "phenomenon" of diligence, lamdanus, and research. Even as a bachur in the Yeshivos Toras Emes, Tomchei Tmimim-Lod, Oholei Torah, and 770, he was the address for deciphering old manuscripts and clarifying complex topics.

Rabbi Keller, who today resides in Coral Springs, Florida, made his name in the Torah world as a researcher, bibliographer, and editor of considerable stature. Over the years he published many works - clearly out of the ordinary - ranging from books on Jewish astronomy such as *Techunas HaShamayim*, to deciphering manuscripts of the *Geonim* and *Rishonim*, to his Geula-themed book series: *Moshiach SheBechol Dor*, *Pirkei Moshiach V'Geula*, and *Moshiach V'Geula - Halacha L'Maaseh*.

Thirty-five years have passed since then. The words "*zol er zen zich tzugreiten*" ("he should see to prepare himself") never stopped echoing in R' Keller's mind. He always felt that the Rebbe expected more from him - not just the writing of sefarim, but something that would constitute a tangible and concrete preparation for the Geula.

He just launched a new initiative, one that takes on a tangible, weighty, and brilliant form: a coin of pure silver.

Not another "*zecher l'machatzis ha'shekel*" ("remembrance of the half-shekel"), and not



Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Keller and his father, Rabbi Yehuda Keller, passing by the Rebbe for dollars.

more symbolic charity coins. R' Keller - who was instructed to prepare so that he could *pasken* immediately when the Geula arrives - moved on to the next step: an authentic *machatzis ha'shekel* coin, strikingly precise, intended for one purpose alone - to be in every Jew's pocket, ready for the moment when the renewal of the avoda of *korbanos* is announced.

"This is not a matter of nostalgia," he says in a special interview with *Beis Moshiach*. "This is the most practical readiness there is. The Rebbe demands that we *live* the Geula, and that means holding in our possession the exact coin required immediately upon the coming of Moshiach."

The Halachic Background

On *Shabbos Parshas Vayigash* 5747 - the first Shabbos after the "*Didon Notzach*" of *Hei Teves* 5747 - the Rebbe declared that in our times we

find ourselves in a special time (and place), in which only one *inyan* remains - and one must say it in the language of one's teacher, in the words of the Previous Rebbe: "*Stand ready, all of you, for the building of the future Beis HaMikdash with the coming of Dovid Malka Meshicha.*"

But what is the definition of "stand ready for the building of the Beis HaMikdash"? The Rambam rules (at the beginning of *Hilchos Beis HaBechira*) that the mitzva to build the Mikdash is "to make a House for G-d, prepared for offering *korbanos* upon it." The emphasis is on the practical ability to offer sacrifices.

Here lies a critical point that many miss: while for *korbanos yachid* (given by an individual) we may need to wait for purification through the ashes of the *Parah Aduma*, concerning *korbanos tzibbur* (communal offerings) - the halacha is that *tumah hutrah b'tzibbur* (*tumah* is permitted for the community). This means

that the moment Moshiach arrives - even before the third Mikdash is completed - the daily *Tamid* offering is already brought!

But how do the *temidim* and *musafim* offerings become communal offerings? The answer: through every individual fulfilling the mitzva to “give the half-shekel each and every

“ This discovery shook Rabbi Keller. If the mitzva requires a specific coin, then the moment Moshiach arrives and we rush to the Beis Ha’Mikdash, we will not be able to pull a few dollars or shekels from our wallets. We will need to have in hand the exact coin of a half-shekel of pure silver.

year” - through this, the offerings purchased from the *terumas ha’lishka* (the Temple treasury) become communal offerings.

But if *machatzis ha’shekel* coins are not available to every Jew obligated to give - we will miss the opportunity to fulfill the mitzva as it should be, so that the purchase of the communal offerings is made from the treasury collection, just as was done throughout all the years the Mishkan and Mikdash stood.

The coin being in the hands of every Jew is the preparation that will enable the renewal of the avoda in the Beis HaMikdash *immediately*.

When a Footnote Becomes a Life’s Project

The story began one fine day about a year and a half ago.

R’ Keller was learning the famous *sicha* of the Rebbe dealing with Moshe Rabbeinu’s difficulty understanding the mitzva of the *machatzis ha’shekel*, until the Holy One Blessed Be He showed him a “coin of fire” (*Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 16, first *sicha* for Parshas Ki Sisa).

“I studied the *sicha*,” R’ Keller recounts, “where the Rebbe states clearly that when the Beis HaMikdash exists and one must bring the *machatzis ha’shekel* - there are two *dinim*: (a) one must give the entire half-shekel at once (and it is impossible to combine several coins to reach the monetary value of a half-shekel); and (b) one must give a coin of ‘*machatzis ha’shekel kesef*’ - a silver half-shekel - as the Rambam phrases it at the beginning of *Hilchos Shekalim* (and certainly one cannot give an equivalent monetary value that is not itself silver coinage).

“And in footnote 35, the Rebbe quotes the Rambam’s language in his *Peirush HaMishnayos*: ‘The *machatzis ha’shekel* must be pure silver made into a coin.’”

This discovery shook R’ Keller. If the mitzva requires a specific coin, then the moment Moshiach arrives and we rush to the Beis HaMikdash, we will not be able to pull a few dollars or shekels from our wallets - paper notes or coins that are not pure silver, or coins whose weight is more or less than a half-shekel. We will need to have in hand the exact coin of a half-shekel of pure silver.

“I said to myself: there is here a requirement for a *machatzis ha’shekel* coin - a single unit of precise weight - so that every Jew who wants to fulfill the mitzva of ‘*giving the half-shekel each year*’ can do so immediately when construction begins on the *mizbeiach* with the coming and *hisgalus* of Moshiach, by handing it to the treasurer who collects these coins for the *terumas ha’lishka* for the communal offerings. Where can such a coin be obtained?”

When he discussed this with Rabbi Yisroel Eidelman, rabbi of Young Israel of Deerfield Beach in South Florida, he learned that between 5757 and 5771, a Yid by the name

Mr. flamer had minted coins of *machatzis ha'shekel* weight intended for fulfilling the commandment - but when his health declined he stopped minting them, and in the meantime that individual passed away and the coins went off the market.

“In the last fifteen years,” R' Keller explains, “there are those who produce coins meant to serve as a *zecher l'machatzis ha'shekel*, and there are those who produce coins intended as donations to important institutions. But the mass production of a halachically precise coin ready for use at the critical moment? That doesn't exist. I recalled the directive the Rebbe gave me to prepare for the halachic matters that would be required immediately upon Moshiach's coming, and I thought this topic is precisely the kind of thing the Rebbe had in mind.”

The Mystery: How Much Does the Torah's Shekel Actually Weigh?

But as R' Keller delved into the subject, he discovered a fascinating historical-halachic thicket. To produce a coin that will be valid for use in the Beis HaMikdash, one cannot work with approximations. Millimetric precision is required.

“Rashi writes in his *peirush* on Torah the precise weight of the shekel; but if you ask bnei Torah who study Chumash and Rashi every day - even many roshei yeshiva and rabbanim - they have no idea what Rashi is talking about,” explains R' Keller. “Rashi, who lived in medieval France, writes in his *peirush* on Parshas Mishpatim (21:32): ‘The shekel weighs four *zehuvim*, which are half an uncia of Cologne’ (a city in Germany whose weight standard was the norm for measuring). The Rambam, by contrast, defines the weight in terms of barleycorns.

“Now try to bridge between them today, when Europe, Israel, and international markets use grams and kilograms. Even

French speakers (or speakers of other Latin languages: Spanish, Italian, Portuguese) have no idea what an *uncia* is, because it is not a unit of measurement they use. And who uses barleycorns as a unit of weight?”

Rabbi Keller dove deeply into the topic, clarifying the question of Torah measurements and weights according to the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* as extensively discussed in Shiurei Torah by Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Naeh, the approbation of the *Pnei Menachem* to the sefer Midos U'Shiurei Torah, the sefer Mesores HaShekel, and more.

The bottom line of R' Keller's research was that according to the Rambam, “the half-shekel from the days of Moshe Rabbeinu” is one-quarter of a *troy ounce* - troy being the standard weight by which silver and gold are sold throughout the world for the past five hundred years. A quarter troy ounce - the weight of the *machatzis ha'shekel* - weighs approximately 7.775 grams.

What to Do When There Are Two Opinions

“In Meseches *Shekalim*, Perek 2, Mishna 4, Rabbi Yehuda states: when Yisrael ascended from the Exile, they weighed out *drachmas*; then they returned to weighing *sela'im*; then they returned to weighing *tevain* (at the weight of the Roman shekel, which is half the *sela*, meaning: half the weight of the holy standard) - meaning that throughout the years of the second Beis HaMikdash, there were years in which the half-shekel coin given weighed more, and years when it weighed less. As the Rebbe emphasizes in *Likkutei Sichos* there in footnote 26: ‘Regarding the size and form of the coin - one can see in practice from the coins of the Bayis that they were not precise about this’ - that it should not exceed a half-shekel.”

“Therefore, the rabbanim ruled to make the *machatzis ha'shekel* coin at a quarter troy ounce, because according to the Rambam - that is precisely the weight of the half-shekel

from the days of Moshe Rabbeinu, below which one may never go.

“Admittedly this weighs slightly more than the weight cited by Rashi, but it is well known that according to Rabbi Meir, one should add a *kalbon* - a small addition beyond the half-shekel - for each half-shekel given (and according to Rav, even the Chachamim agree with this).

“In any case, even according to Rashi there is no halachic problem with the *machatzis ha’shekel* weighing a bit more, as long as everyone’s contribution is equal - that every Jew gives the same coin.”

Thus the precise weight of the coin was established: 7.775 grams of pure silver - one quarter troy ounce. A weight that honors both opinions, meets halachic requirements from every angle, and enables every Jew to hold in hand a coin with which to fulfill the mitzva the moment it become applicable.

R’ Keller recounts: “After it occurred to me to mint the *machatzis ha’shekel* coin, and I plunged into the depths of the topic of the weight of the *dinar*, *shekel*, and *sela*, and the views of the *Rishonim* were clarified (Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam, the Rif and the Rambam) - I presented the analysis and conclusions before rabbanim and *morei horaah* who deliberated with me on this topic; and they agreed to mint a *machatzis ha’shekel* coin of pure silver weighing one quarter troy ounce.”

Not a “Remembrance” — the Real Thing

“Wait,” I ask Rabbi Keller, “every year on *Taanis Esther*, every Jew goes over to the plate in shul and gives the *machatzis ha’shekel*. Some give three half-dollar or half-shekel coins, some give according to the silver equivalent. So what is the great *chiddush* of your coin?”

R’ Keller smiles. This is the question he hears most frequently, and the answer reveals the depth of the paradigm shift he is leading.

“We need to set things straight,” he says, laying things on the table clearly. “The custom of giving three half-coins that we observe today in shuls is a holy and important minhag mentioned in the *Rishonim* and codified in the *Rema*’s glosses. But the definition of this custom is: to give before Purim half of the fixed coin in that place and time, as a *zecher l’machatzis hashekel* — a remembrance of the half-shekel — and three should be given, and it should be given on the night of Purim before Mincha. (According to the *Maharil*, this money is designated for the poor.) That is to say, the reason for this custom is merely to remind us that in the time of the Beis HaMikdash, the half-shekel was given.”

He adds, quoting from the sefer *Minhagei Maharil*, that in addition to the three half-coins, it is proper for every man aged twenty and above to give the equivalent value of the original *machatzis ha’shekel* (in silver coins) to tzedaka. In Ashkenaz, only individuals adopted this practice, while the great Sefardic authorities in recent generations wrote to follow this practice. But even this, which is already closer to the original mitzva, is still merely a *zecher l’Mikdash* - and therefore there is no requirement to give it as a single silver coin, as the original mitzva requires.

“Consider the following scenario,” he continues with his characteristic passion. “Moshiach arrives now, and we proceed to build the Mikdash. The treasurers set up tables where everyone can fulfill the mitzva of giving the *machatzis ha’shekel* and become a partner in the *korbanos tzibbur*.

“Anyone who has not acquired the *machatzis ha’shekel* coin in advance will miss the first opportunity to fulfill the mitzva of ‘giving the half-shekel each year’ - and thereby become a partner in all *korbanos tzibbur*. This mitzva cannot be fulfilled by giving a dollar and a half, as we currently do as a remembrance on Purim.

“There is another halachic point: the Gemara states that from the pasuk, *and you shall bind the money in your hand*’ - said regarding one

who wishes to redeem *maaser sheini* produce onto coins - we learn that the produce must be redeemed onto a coin that bears an image, and not an *asimon* (an unformed piece of silver without any stamp). In other words, it is insufficient to bring to the Mikdash a melted lump of silver; one needs a coin that is stamped and ready for use. The coin I created is not an *asimon* nor a medallion - it is a silver coin with an 'image,' exactly as halacha requires."

This is where the new coin enters the picture. Unlike "zecher" coins sometimes sold by various organizations (such as the Machon HaMikdash and others) whose value is symbolic and serve as institutional donations - "the goal is not for you to donate this to me now," Rabbi Keller emphasizes. "The goal is for you to purchase this for yourself - put it in your pocket, your cabinet, or your safe. And it stays with you. Why? So that when Moshiach is revealed, and we proceed to build the Mikdash and the *mizbeiach*, and the treasurers set up tables, you will have a coin ready in your

pocket with which to fulfill the mitzva of giving the *machatzis ha'shekel*. That is the difference between performing a *zecher* of a mitzva and being truly ready to fulfill it."

This is a dramatic shift in perception. From now on, we hold the *machatzis ha'shekel* in our pocket or safe - ready and prepared for the building of the Beis HaMikdash.

"Whoever acquires this coin declares thereby to the Holy One Blessed Be He: '*Ribono shel olam*, I am not merely remembering the Mikdash - I have prepared for its building.'"

The Detective from the Manhattan Library: Where Did the Rambam's Drawings Disappear?

As mentioned at the opening of this article, the idea of minting the coin was not born in a vacuum. It began with that dramatic moment

Both sides of the machatzis hashekel coin designed by Rabbi YY Keller



in the summer of 5751, when R' Keller's newly published sefer was brought to the Rebbe.

To understand how a bachur comes to engage with such weighty seriousness in topics of the Mikdash, one must go back to the mid-80s.

The tamim, Yosef Yitzchok Keller was then a bachur learning in the *beis medrash*, involved in writing *hearos* and *biurim*, and *pilpulim*; he also assisted in his free time with editing halachic works whose authors needed a talmid chacham to check rare *sifrei halacha* and *poskim* found primarily in libraries. From time to time he would travel to the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in Manhattan to examine ancient books and manuscripts - long before many rare books became freely accessible to all through *HebrewBooks* and similar programs.

His father, R' Yehuda Keller *a'h* - remembered by all frequenters of 770 - was laboring in those days on his monumental work on the structure of the Mikdash according to the Rambam's approach. From time to time he would ask his son to check in certain places in the Rambam (in the sefer *Avoda* and sefer *Korbanos*) whether any variant readings existed in manuscripts.

In that library, among shelves laden with rare manuscripts found nowhere else, the young Keller discovered a secret concealed for hundreds of years.

In a *sicha* of the Rebbe edited for Parshas Teruma 5743, the Rebbe elaborates that the six branches of the Menorah emerge from the central stem diagonally - not in a semicircle - and bases this in part on the Rambam's own drawing in his handwriting in the *Peirush HaMishnayos* on Meseches Menachos, where the six branches of the Menorah are drawn emerging diagonally from the central stem.

Prior to Shabbos Parshas Teruma 5744, R' Yehoshua Mondshine published an article in the Kfar Chabad weekly, revealing that the drawing in question is found not only in the *Peirush HaMishnayos* but also in

manuscripts of the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* (and afterward the Rebbe added an addendum to the aforementioned *sicha* in *Likkutei Sichos*, noting Mondshine's article).

"On one of my visits to the library, I asked to examine ancient manuscripts of the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*," he recounts, the excitement still evident in his voice. "And suddenly, I discovered that the Rambam had drawn not only the *Menorah* in his *Hilchos Beis HaBechira* (in manuscripts one even finds at the end of Perek 3, Halacha 10, the words: 'and this is its form'), but also the form of the *mizbeiach* and the form of the *heichal* - and he even referenced these drawings within the *Mishneh Torah* itself. But when you open the printed edition of the Rambam that we have at home, these drawings are absent..."

Where did they disappear, and why?

Here R' Keller investigated and uncovered a fascinating and sad historical story: "At the dawn of the printing press, when sefarim began to be printed and the *Mishneh Torah* was first printed (in Rome around the year 5233), it was very difficult to print illustrations. The first printer of the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* wanted to save money. Preparing plates for illustrations was an expensive and complicated affair, so he simply skipped them - and not only did he skip the drawings, he even omitted the words indicating that a drawing followed (such as in Perek 2, end of Halacha 9, regarding the *mizbeiach*: 'and this is its form according to its measurements,' and at the end of Halacha 12: 'and this is its form').

"The *Peirush HaMishnayos* of the Rambam was first printed with the *Mishnayos* in Naples in the year 5252. It is worth examining whether they printed the Rambam's drawings in the *Peirush HaMishnayos* there, but in any case they did not omit the words describing the drawing, and in places where they did not copy the drawing, they at least left a blank space. But when the *Mishneh Torah* was first printed, they did not even leave the words describing the drawing.

“From then on, for hundreds of years, nearly every subsequent printed edition of the *Mishneh Torah* copied most or all of its text from a previous printing. And the Jews of Europe and Eretz Yisrael studied the *Mishneh Torah* without even knowing that the Rambam had drawn these drawings within it - let alone actually seeing the drawings the Rambam drew and referenced within the *Mishneh Torah*.”

This discovery burned within him. He understood that it was impossible to continue studying the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* without the drawings the Rambam had created for its learners.

“In 5751, when my father was working on his sefer *Minchas Yehuda V'Yerushalayim* - dealing with elucidations and chiddushim in the Rambam's *Hilchos Avoda v'Korbanos* - and asked me to help him in proofreading the book, I proposed to him that we print '*Hilchos Beis HaBechira of the Rambam According to Manuscripts*,' with a brief commentary and an extended commentary, deciphering the cross-references in the Rambam, and references to his statements elsewhere. He called it '*Eitz Yosef*' - as an appendix to the section he had written, which he titled '*Eitz Yehuda*.' And the drawings - identical to those found in the *Peirush HaMishnayos* - we printed based on the drawings in Rabbi Yosef Kapach's edition of the *Peirush HaMishnayos*, which used a photographic reproduction of the Rambam's own manuscript.

“When he brought the book to the Rebbe, the Rebbe noted that facsimiles from the manuscript copyists of the *Mishneh Torah* had not been printed - especially the Rambam's signature, with which he signed in three different ways.

“Following the Rebbe's directive, they reprinted '*Hilchos Beis HaBechira of the Rambam According to Manuscripts*,' with photographic reproduction of the drawings from the Rambam's own manuscript. This book was a genuine revolution. Suddenly learners saw the Mikdash through the Rambam's own eyes.”

It was this sefer - the fruit of countless days and nights deciphering manuscripts and deliberating over the Rambam's words - that Yosef Yitzchok Keller presented to the Rebbe at the dollar distribution on Sunday, Parshas Eikev, the 17th of Menachem Av, 5751. And then the Rebbe directed him to “prepare to rule on halachic matters” concerning the mitzvos that will be renewed in the time to come.

The Menorah Drawing and the Rambam's Manuscripts

When you hold the coin in your hand, the eye is drawn immediately to the front. At the center of the coin stands the famous *menorah*. One cannot mistake it: the branches are straight, diagonal, cutting through the air in clean, sharp lines.

“The drawing of the *menorah* on the *machatzis ha'shekel* coin - with the branches extending diagonally,” says R' Keller, “renders the words of Rashi in his Torah commentary and the Rambam's drawing - both in the *Peirush HaMishnayos* and in manuscripts of the *Mishneh Torah* - into something tangible.”

And what is on the other side of the coin?

Rather than a futuristic or abstract image of the third Beis HaMikdash, R' Keller chose to stamp the façade of the second Mikdash.

“Why?” I ask. “We are waiting for the third Mikdash...”

Here he produces a fascinating explanation blending history with a Geula vision: “First, there is the matter of continuity. Several of the original Jewish coins - those minted during the Great Revolt against the Romans - bore the façade of the *heichal* in Bayis Sheini. When we mint today a coin bearing the façade of the second Mikdash, we are closing a circle of two thousand years.

“The Jews who raised the banner of revolt against Roman rule at the end of Bayis Sheini - during the reign of Bar Kochba, with the active support and participation of Rabi Akiva - stamped on the coin the form of the eastern

gate of the *Ezras Yisrael*, the Nicanor Gate. All the gates were changed to gold except for the Nicanor Gate, because a miracle had occurred with it. This is a declaration proclaiming before all the world's inhabitants: we are not subject to the laws of nature and the nations; the existence of the Jewish people is miraculous."

But there is a deeper layer here. "Rav Aizik Shwei raises an enormous question: if the third Mikdash will be built according to Yechezkel's prophecy - whether built by human hands or descending from Heaven - why does the Rambam bother to write out for us all the measurements and forms of Bayis Sheini in such precise detail? His conclusion is that if the third Mikdash is built by human beings, it is possible that initially it will be built in the form of Bayis Sheini - and only afterward will the third Mikdash be renovated according to Yechezkel's prophecy.

"Therefore the coin bears the image of Bayis Sheini - as a symbol of our practical readiness to build the Beis HaMikdash here and now. Around the image appears the prayer-demand: '*Sheyibaneh Beis HaMikdash b'meheira byameinu.*'"

Between "Believing" and "Waiting"

To sit with Rabbi Keller and converse with him about the Mikdash, about the anticipation, and about what will be - is an extraordinary pleasure. It is a conversation with an expert, a vast scholar, who lives and breathes this subject. Through him, one can almost "touch" the Mikdash...

"Jewish communities are accustomed to recite each day: 'I believe with complete faith in the coming of Moshiach,'" R' Keller wishes to emphasize. "But the Rambam, in *Hilchos Melachim*, sets a higher bar. He writes: 'Whoever does not believe in him, or whoever does not await his coming, denies not only the rest of the prophets...' Note: the Rambam

emphasizes that *believing* is important - but not sufficient. One must also *await*."

What is the difference?

"Awaiting is an active state of mind," explains R' Keller. "Rabbi Chananya Yosef Eizenbach once showed me the words of the *Minchas Chinuch* on the mitzva of tefillin. The *Chinuch* asks: Since tefillin is about the 'subjugation of the heart and mind,' why must one bind boxes made of animal hide on the arm and head? Why is it not sufficient to meditate and contemplate the subjugation of heart and mind? And the *Chinuch* answers with the famous statement: '*Acharei ha'peulos nimshachos ha'levavos*' (hearts are drawn after actions).' The physical action is what gives expression to the emotional feeling.

"This is precisely where our coin enters the picture. When you purchase a *machatzis ha'shekel* coin and place it in your pocket or safe in order to be ready to fulfill the mitzva of giving the half-shekel immediately when Moshiach comes - you have transformed your '*I believe*' into '*I will await him.*' You have performed a physical action that broadcasts: 'I am ready!'"

So how does one become an active "awaiter?"

"Very simply," he explains. "Go to the website *chatzishkekel.com* and order the coin. Currently, shipments are to the US and Canada, but we are working hard to enable every Jew in the world to hold this key to the Geula."

And what does one do with it in the meantime?

"Guard it carefully - and immediately after Moshiach's coming, when the treasurers prepare to acquire the first *korbanos* to be offered on the *mizbeiach*, and set up tables where one can deposit *machatzis ha'shekel* coins - each of us will pull out this coin and give it with simcha."

As I leave the room, the words "*zol er zen zich tzugreten*" - "he should see to prepare himself" - still echo in my ears... ■

Times for Brooklyn NY

שבת קודש
שבוע חג הפסח
Chag Pesach

SHABBOS י"ז ניסן חול המועד
APR 04

Candle Lighting 07:06 Shabbos Ends 08:05

ג' פרקים הלכות קידוש החודש · פרקים ג-ה
פרק אחד הלכות קריאת שמע · פרק ג
ספר המצוות מצוות עשה קנג

עלות השחר 05:10 · הנץ החמה 06:34 · קריאת שמע 09:46
חצות היום 12:59 · שקיעה 07:24 · צאת הכוכבים 07:53

SUNDAY י"ח ניסן חול המועד
APR 05

ג' פרקים הלכות קידוש החודש · פרקים ו-ח
פרק אחד הלכות קריאת שמע · פרק ד
ספר המצוות מצוות עשה קנג

עלות השחר 05:08 · הנץ החמה 06:32 · קריאת שמע 09:45 · חצות 12:59 · שקיעה 07:25 · צאת הכוכבים 07:54

MONDAY י"ט ניסן חול המועד
APR 06

ג' פרקים הלכות קידוש החודש · פרקים ט-יא
פרק אחד הלכות תפלה וברכת כהנים · פרק א
ספר המצוות מצוות עשה קנג

עלות השחר 05:06 · הנץ החמה 06:31 · קריאת שמע 09:44 · חצות 12:58 · שקיעה 07:26 · צאת הכוכבים 07:55

TUESDAY כ' ניסן חול המועד
Candle Lighting 08:07

ג' פרקים הלכות קידוש החודש · פרקים יב-יד
פרק אחד הלכות תפלה וברכת כהנים · פרק ב
ספר המצוות מצוות עשה קנג

עלות השחר 05:05 · הנץ החמה 06:29 · קריאת שמע 09:43 · חצות 12:58 · שקיעה 07:27 · צאת הכוכבים 07:56

WEDNESDAY כ"א ניסן שביעי של פסח
Candle Lighting After 07:27

ג' פרקים הלכות קידוש החודש · פרקים טו-יז
פרק אחד הלכות תפלה וברכת כהנים · פרק ג
ספר המצוות מצוות עשה קנג

עלות השחר 05:03 · הנץ החמה 06:28 · קריאת שמע 09:42 · חצות 12:58 · שקיעה 07:28 · צאת הכוכבים 07:58

THURSDAY כ"ב ניסן אחרון של פסח
Yom Tov Ends 07:28

ג' פרקים קידוש החודש · יח-יט | תעניות · א
פרק אחד הלכות תפלה וברכת כהנים · פרק ד
ספר המצוות מצוות עשה קנג.נט

עלות השחר 05:01 · הנץ החמה 06:26 · קריאת שמע 09:41 · חצות 12:58 · שקיעה 07:29 · צאת הכוכבים 07:59

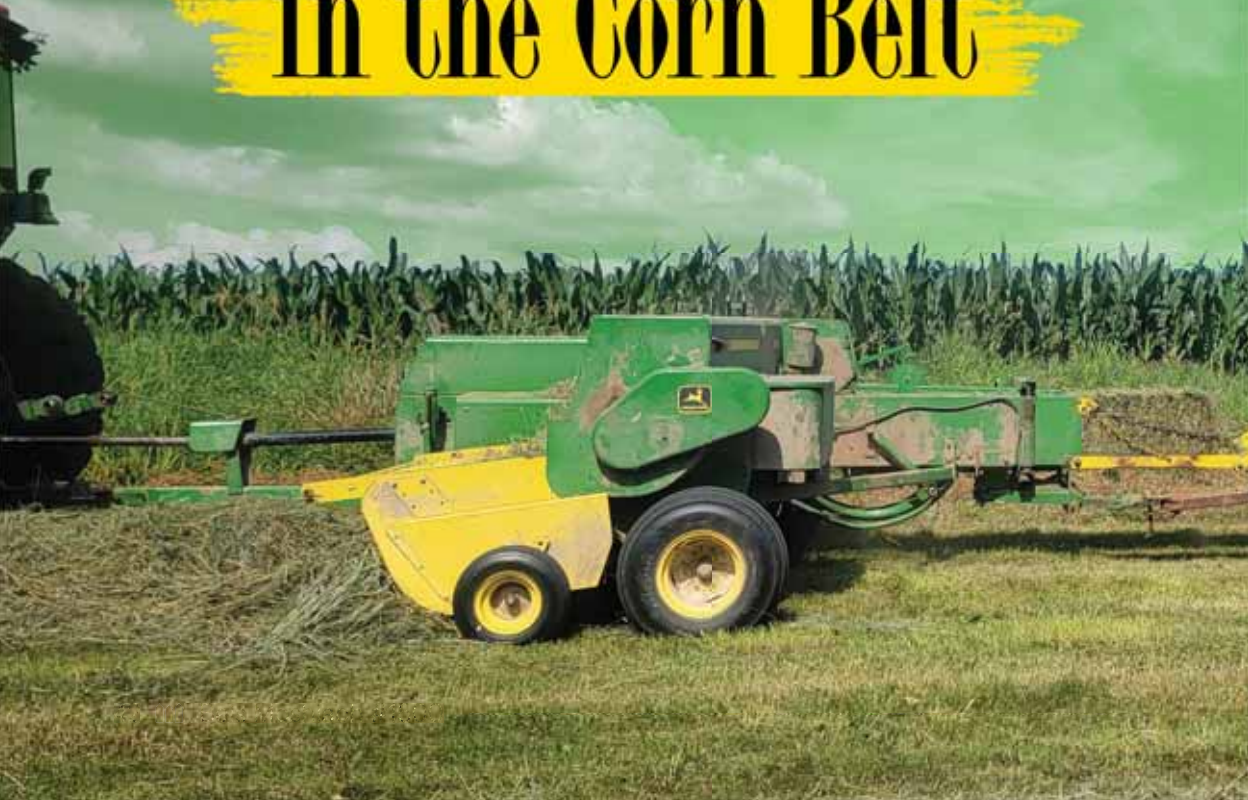
FRIDAY כ"ג ניסן אסרוחג
APR 10

ג' פרקים הלכות תעניות · פרקים ב-ד
פרק אחד הלכות תפלה וברכת כהנים · פרק ה
ספר המצוות מצוות עשה נט

עלות השחר 04:59 · הנץ החמה 06:24 · קריאת שמע 09:40 · חצות 12:57 · שקיעה 07:30 · צאת הכוכבים 08:00

THE SECRET

in the Corn Belt



ON A FARM IN THE MIDDLE OF IOWA'S CORNFIELDS, **RABBI YEHOShUA ("JOSH") TANNENBAUM** HAS BUILT AN UNLIKELY SHTETL FROM SCRATCH — COMPLETE WITH GOATS, HORSES, SILENCE AND A GEMARA SHIUR UNDER A TREE. THE BOYS WHO COME HERE ARE THE ONES WHO DON'T FIT, WHO CAN'T SIT STILL, WHO ARE ONE ULTIMATUM AWAY FROM LEAVING YESHIVA. THE BOYS WHO LEAVE: ROOTED, SETTLED, AND READY FOR LIFE

BY AVROHOM RAINITZ



The deep silence stretching across the expanses of Iowa is a silence that allows you to hear even the heartbeat of nature, so far from the digital noise and urban pressure. Within this silence, under the shade of a broad-canopied tree on the farm, one of the miracles of ‘Camp Shtetl’ took place.

One boy, let’s call him Yanky for the sake of this story, sat there, his back turned to the Gemara shiur being conducted nearby. In his hands, a small whittling knife, and between his fingers, a simple tree branch. He peeled chip after chip, layer after layer, and it seemed that with each peeling of wood, another shell covering his soul was shed.

“Yanky came to us with a very heavy ‘file,’” says Rabbi Josh Tannenbaum. “His father called me in despair, told me that his son was diagnosed with severe ADHD and learning disabilities. At the yeshiva where he studied they gave him an ultimatum: either he takes strong medications to be able to sit ‘normally’ in class, or he goes home. And Yanky? He hated those medications. He said they made him feel like someone who wasn’t himself.”

Already in the preliminary Zoom call that Rabbi Josh conducted with the boy, he saw a restless kid. “He talked to me while jumping on a trampoline, completely lacking repose. I immediately realized that a different approach was needed here.” When summer came, R’ Josh suggested the boy put the pills aside and try to connect with himself through nature. “During the shiurim, he didn’t sit at a table like everyone else, but on the side, and whittled branches to create ‘marshmallow sticks,’ but his ears were open. For the first time in his life, no one yelled at him for not sitting straight”...

The change was dramatic. “His father called me during the summer completely astonished,” R’ Josh recalls. “He told me about a video call he arranged between Yanky and his brother who stayed in the city. The brother tried to provoke him, asked him: ‘What, doesn’t it bother you that they’re picking on you? Come

on, fight them!’ And Yanky, who in any other setting would have exploded, answered calmly: ‘Why fight? Over here, if something happens, we just talk about it.’ The father got emotional on the phone. He told me: ‘Yanky is a different child’...”

This is the great victory of the ‘Shtetl.’ This boy, who finished the summer without needing medications, returned to the yeshiva world equipped with new strengths. “Today,” R’ Josh concludes with satisfaction, “he’s learning in a completely regular yeshiva. Not only has he integrated, but he’s become the boy who’s always at the ‘seder Chassidus’ in the evening. He found his peace here among the trees, and managed to take that peace back with him to the walls of the yeshiva.”

Entering the Room at the Right Moment

To understand the force that drives R’ Josh Tannenbaum on the Iowa prairies, one must go back in time, to the line for receiving dollars from the Rebbe. That’s where the first spark was planted.

“My connection with the Rebbe is a family story,” he says. “My mother grew up in Crown Heights in the early years of the Rebbe’s leadership. She told us how she would see the Rebbe walking down the street, and sometimes he would stop and give her coins for tzedaka.

“My mother grew up in a modern family, and after she got married, we lived in the Five Towns, an area where modern Orthodox Jews lived. Nevertheless, she always had a warm feeling for Lubavitch and when she heard that the Rebbe was distributing dollars for tzedaka on Sundays, she would go occasionally with her children to receive a dollar for a bracha from the Rebbe.”

One Sunday, when she was already a mother of four, she came to the Rebbe and received four dollars for the children. Immediately after, she continued on her way. Then the Rebbe called her back. “He handed her a fifth dollar and said: ‘May all your children be blessed.’ A



Rabbi Josh Tannenbaum with campers

week later she discovered she was expecting her fifth child...

Young Josh's first encounter with Chabad happened thanks to a classmate in the Five Towns, Yossi Weinstein. "In fifth grade, Yossi told me he was going to Gan Yisrael during the summer months. I came home and told my parents: 'I want to go with him' and they agreed." This trip was an entry into another world for him. "We bought a Nusach Ari siddur, new tzitzis, and set out on a journey that was new and amazing for me."

The return home from camp was no less dramatic. "I came back a different child and my parents were frightened," he laughs. "During my stay at camp I caught lice, so they gave me a short haircut... when I came back and started proclaiming the 'pesukim' or Chabad slogans I learned at camp - my parents thought I had jumped into waters too deep... I already knew then - this is it, I'm 'tailored' for Chabad."

Despite the strong pull, the path wasn't easy, certainly not straight. During his teenage years, he continued searching for himself, and wandered a lot between different types. Only after high school, when he went to study in Israel, did things come to a head. He arrived in Tzfas where he met Rabbi Yaakov (Yankel) Orimland, someone who became his mentor.

"At a certain stage I got into trouble with the yeshiva administration, and the Rosh Yeshiva told me that if I didn't sign a commitment to strict rules - I would have to leave. By hashgacha pratis, Rabbi Orimland entered the office and heard this. He turned to the Rosh Yeshiva and said simply: 'I'll take responsibility for him.'"

This gesture of absolute trust in a boy who didn't fit in changed his life.

Later, Rabbi Orimland opened a special program for boys who had gone off the derech, and Josh became a madrich in his yeshiva. He lived in Rabbi Orimland's home for two years,



Hands-on lesson on making tzitzis

and began to understand that true chinuch passes through the heart, through trips and through soul conversations. “In those years I merited to strengthen and deepen my connection to Chassidus and to the Rebbe. I knew this was going to be a big part of my life,” he says, adding that there the decision also matured in his heart: one day, he too would establish a place for those boys seeking to learn in a different atmosphere.

Returning to Yeshiva

After formative years in Tzfas, Josh understood he was facing a crossroads. “I knew the time had come to move forward,” he recalls. “I returned to the US and decided that before entering full force into the world of work and employment, I must lay for myself a strong foundation of Chassidus and Torah learning.”

He went to yeshiva in Morristown, New Jersey, where he dedicated a full year to intensive study.

However, as someone for whom “doing” burns in his bones, the respite didn’t last long. “In Morristown I befriended the Meer family, and together with their son Yehuda we decided to open a construction business.” What started as small jobs quickly became building actual houses.

Despite the economic success, his heart pulled him elsewhere. “I always knew I wanted to be involved in kiruv. It was part of me since my youth. When I married my wife Shira, we both knew we didn’t want to stay in the heart of the established Jewish center, and we started looking for a place where we could have more impact.

“Our dream was to find a place where we could combine city community life together with a farm. We wanted to live the rural lifestyle, with animals, land and manual labor, and use it to bring Jews closer.”

The Tannenbaum family’s journey to the heart of America’s “Corn Belt” actually started from the professional aspirations of his wife, Shira. After completing her medical studies,

she decided to specialize in the difficult field of anesthesia, and subsequently - a specialization in heart, cardio-thoracic surgery.

Following the specializations in medical centers, the two embarked on a series of wanderings. “In every place we came to, we asked ourselves: how can we help Jews here? We always knew that the goal was to find a permanent place where we could establish our dream - a combination of rural life with shlichus.”

When the time came to look for a permanent position for Shira, they faced an enormous challenge: the modern medical world doesn't always accommodate the schedule of Shabbos and Jewish holidays. “To find a senior medical position when the first condition is ‘Shabbos observant,’ is almost impossible,” explains R' Josh. “Everywhere they told us it would be very difficult.”

But then they arrived in Bettendorf on the banks of the Mississippi River, in the state of Iowa. “We checked five or six different places throughout the US, and each time we asked ourselves: Why here? Why Iowa?” The answer came from the management of the local medical center. “The moment they heard about Shabbos observance, they said immediately: ‘We love to diversify our staff. Don't worry, we'll manage. You won't work on Shabbos, unless it's an emergency case of saving a life’...”

This small miracle was the sign for them. “Everything just worked out. G-d's hand was completely clear,” he says. The place was quiet, the expanses infinite, and the distance from Chicago - about two and a half hours' drive - allowed them to stay connected to a large Chabad center, while they built their private “island.”

They settled on a large farm outside the city. Initially they thought the children would learn in the online Chabad schools, but when they encountered technical and bureaucratic difficulties, Shira and Josh decided to take the reins into their own hands. “Some of the

children remained learning in the online Chabad schools, and in parallel we established a study program at home. The children learn here on the farm, combining limudei kodesh alongside work in the field. Every time I asked them if they wanted to return to a regular yeshiva, the answer was unequivocal: ‘No way! We finish all the material in half the time, and we have time to go outside, take care of animals and live in nature.’”

Thus the home in Iowa became a living school and a vibrant shlichus. The children grew up between the goat herd and the pages of Gemara.

This was the perfect background for what would become their flagship project - the place where every Jewish boy can feel at home, even if he feels like a stranger in other places.

Discovering Souls Among the Furrows

The shlichus in Iowa, R' Josh discovered from the beginning, doesn't only take place within the walls of a shul. It also happens in the building supply yards, in the big-box stores, and especially - in the barn... “I walk around here with a kipa and tzitzis out, and because of the farm work I wear work clothes,” he says with a smile.

This unique appearance, a Chassidic Jew who is also a farmer who understands tractors, is the key that opens even sealed hearts. The most amazing story that R' Josh shares with us is the encounter with Benson.

“One day we realized we had too many male goats on the farm. According to halacha, this creates questions of firstborn status, and I decided to sell some of them. I turned to my neighbor, a local farmer, and asked him where goats are sold in the area. He told me: ‘You need Benson.’ I picked up the phone, two days later a long trailer arrived.”

Out of the trailer came a man who looked like the embodiment of the American cowboy: wide-brimmed hat, torn shirt, worn

work boots and a tough look. “He got out of the truck, looked at me and said in a heavy accent: ‘I can say honestly that you’re the first Orthodox Jew I’ve ever bought livestock from’.. I asked him in wonder: ‘What do you have to do with Orthodox Jews?’ He didn’t answer in words, but simply pulled down his shirt collar and revealed a huge Star of David tattoo displayed on his chest. ‘I’m Jewish just like you,’ he declared.”

This moment became the beginning of a journey. “I tried to put tefillin on him, but he immediately declared ‘religion and I don’t connect.’ It took him two years until he agreed to enter the shul to hear the Aseres HaDibros. Today he’s already part of our extended community. He loves to tell me stories about the ‘gefilte fish’ from his childhood, and throws out different words he remembers in Yiddish.”

These encounters repeat themselves again and again. “Once I was standing in line at Menards (a large building supply chain) and ordered paint for a project on the farm. Suddenly someone behind me says: ‘Hey, you’re from the East Coast, right? Your accent gives you away.’ I turned around and saw a man covered in tattoos. It turned out he was a Jew from Brooklyn who landed in Iowa. Today he comes to us every year to get yahrtzeit candles”..

R’ Josh explains that specifically the loneliness and the enormous distances between city and city, between farm and farm, cause these Jews to awaken. “I don’t need to look for them, they just come to me because I look different; because I live my Yiddishkeit proudly even in the middle of nowhere.”

These encounters are the fuel of the Shtetl in Iowa. They prove to him that in every place where a Jew sets foot, there are sparks waiting for their redemption - sometimes through a transistor, sometimes through building a fence, and sometimes through a simple transaction of a few goats.

Don’t Go to Camp; Be the Camp

In the world of modern summer camps, the child is the customer. He comes to be entertained, fed and have a good time. But at R’ Josh’s ‘Camp Shtetl,’ the model is exactly the opposite. “Our slogan is: ‘Don’t go to camp, be the camp,’” he explains. “The truth is they don’t come to a ready-made place. They come to live it, build it and be part of it.”

The change begins the moment they land on the farm. All electronic devices - phones, music players, tablets - are collected and deposited for safekeeping. “We don’t have electronics, period. In today’s world, kids are unfamiliar with such silence. This disconnect is necessary so they can start to hear themselves, nature and their friends.”

The daily schedule on the farm is a combination of ‘book and sword’ in an agricultural version. The morning opens with davening and learning, and the learning is always connected to what the hands are about to do. “If they’re learning hilchos Shabbos, they go outside and build an *eruv*. If they’re learning about the *melachos* of the Mishkan, we work in construction, experience fire and iron. The boys see the shochet at work, understand how food arrives.”

Responsibility is the name of the game. “Every morning there’s a list of chores and each boy has a job: feed the horses, milk the goats, collect eggs or prepare meals. We don’t have a cleaning staff. If someone comes in with mud to the house, I tell him: ‘Here’s the mop, here’s the broom, this is your home - clean it.’ This is a maturation process. They learn that they’re not guests in the world, but homeowners who are responsible for what happens around them.”

One of the times that R’ Josh won’t forget is building fences for the horses. “We worked together with the campers, drilled in the ground, stretched fences. At the end of the summer we took them to a rodeo. I saw one of the boys standing there, leaning on the fence and looking at the horses with dreamy eyes. He asked my wife, Shira: ‘It’s true that we’ll



buy at least two horses, right? So one won't be lonely?' His words - 'we'll buy,' 'we' - moved me. He didn't feel like he came to visit someone else's farm. He felt it was his, that he built this place."

The hard work and dirt are an integral part of the experience. "We work hard, play hard, and usually get dirty," he laughs. "Boys who come from the city, who are used to mommy doing their laundry and food arriving by take-out, suddenly discover their own strength. When they see my little boys, aged nine and ten, managing the herd, it gives them an enormous push."

The Plans Changed, But Not the Destination

For years R' Josh dreamed of taking his large family on a roots trip to Eretz Yisrael. "Covid delayed the plans, but two years ago it finally happened," he says. "I planned a detailed route, tour guides, lodging in Tzfas; I wanted the children to experience the Land that I love so much."

But on the morning of Simchas Torah, in a rented apartment in Yerushalayim's Rechavia neighborhood, the plans shattered. "We woke

up to the sound of sirens. At first we didn't understand what was happening. My sons went out to the street and saw that everything was empty. Slowly the terrible rumors began. On motzoei Yom Tov, when we turned on our phones, we understood the magnitude of the disaster."

Instead of succumbing to panic or looking for the first flight home, he acted exactly as he teaches his campers on the farm: he identified a need and went to work. "I called a tour guide I knew and asked him: 'What are we doing?' He told me that his friends at the front need everything - from undershirts and socks and so on. At that moment I announced to the family: 'We're not touring, we're enlisting'..."

Within a few hours, R' Josh became a logistical operation. He raised thousands of dollars from his community in Iowa through quick messages. The next morning, the whole family was already traveling with two minibuses, loaded with equipment. "We drove deep into the south, right up to the Gaza border. We saw the black smoke rising from the Strip, passed by tanks and APCs that stood ready on the road."

One moment was etched in his memory with special intensity. "We arrived at a settlement



Rabbi Josh Tannenbaum teaches automotive technology and construction of buildings.

where soldiers gathered at the shul as a meeting point. The moment I got out of the vehicle, a huge explosion was heard. Boom! The ground shook beneath us. I ducked instinctively, my heart was pounding. One of the soldiers saw me, patted me on the shoulder calmly and said: ‘Brother, don’t worry, that’s “ours”...’

For the remainder of their stay in Eretz Yisrael, the Tannenbaum family didn’t visit historical sites, but IDF bases. “We distributed equipment, talked with the fighters, put tefillin on them and strengthened them. When we returned to Iowa - through a circuitous route via Dubai because of flight cancellations - we felt like we were leaving a country at war, and it was hard. We felt like we wanted to stay longer and help.”

Planting, Growth and Chassidische Patience

The concept “for man is a tree of the field” takes on a physical and tangible meaning on the Iowa farm. R’ Josh, who combines in his daily routine caring for a cherry and apple orchard alongside educating lively boys, sees

the parallel lines stretching before his eyes anew every morning.

“There’s an inseparable connection between the way you care for the land and the way you care for children,” he explains. “Boys are like trees; you must start with the right seed, but you mainly need patience. In the modern world everything happens fast, at the click of a button. In agriculture, you learn that you can’t rush nature. You water, you fertilize, you take care - and wait, and in the middle pray a lot... You can’t force a tree to grow faster, just as you can’t force a boy to go through an internal process before he’s ready for it.”

One of the fascinating things about the farm is the connection between halacha and living reality. “When we learn about brachos over food, what defines ‘fruit of the tree’ and ‘fruit of the earth,’ we don’t need imagination. We go out to the orchard. When the camper sees the tree he planted the previous summer beginning to sprout buds, he understands what Divine Providence is. He understands what investment is, giving, and also that his investment bears fruit.”

R' Josh describes how nature serves as a “calming teacher” for boys who have difficulty in frontal frameworks. “A boy who sits in class and feels suffocated, goes out here, takes a hoe or milks a goat, and suddenly something in him opens. The pressure disappears. In nature there’s no competition of grades. The tree never judges you. This connection to the land gives them an anchor. They return home with a clearer perspective on life, because they experienced the ‘truth’ of creation.”

Even the topic of kashrus becomes an experience. “For a city boy, ‘chalav Yisroel’ is a sign on a carton in the supermarket. Here, when he milks the goat with his own hands in the morning, he understands what it means that the milk is kosher from the moment of production. This turns Yiddishkeit into something that penetrates the blood, not just something known in the head.

“Parents write to me that their children return with inner peace. They feel that part of their neshama remained here, connected to the roots. They learn to appreciate the small things - the water, the bread they baked themselves, the tree that needs daily care. This is avodas Hashem through feet and hands, and this is the best way to raise ‘trees’ that will be able to withstand any wind.”

Life in the “Shtetl” - Family as a Shlichus

It becomes clear that the name “Shtetl” chosen for the place is not just a nostalgic title, but an accurate description of the human dynamics that take place there. On the Iowa farm you won’t find ‘staff’ and ‘customers’ in the usual sense; you’ll find an extended family living their life together.

“Baruch Hashem, we’ve been blessed with a large family, *bli ayin hara*, fifteen children,” he says contentedly. “And that’s actually the camp. Our home is also the yeshiva, also a school and also a summer camp operating 24 hours a day. When campers come to us, they don’t enter a dormitory, they enter our home.”

One of the fascinating points in the interview is the way the family’s children serve as role models for the visiting boys. “It’s interesting to see a 16-year-old boy who comes from the city, standing amazed in front of my 11-year-old son who teaches him how to behave like a ‘young adult.’ My children don’t know anything else; for them loading food bags and caring for animals is a daily responsibility from as long as they remember themselves. My daughter was nine years old when she was already moving through the field to scatter seeds.”

This connection creates an atmosphere and there’s nothing like it. “Many people asked me: ‘And what about the social aspect? Aren’t your children lonely there on the farm?’ The answer is that our home is always full. Whether it’s a family that comes for a visit that turns into a ‘vacation’ of ten days, or groups of young people, students or camp participants. Not three weeks pass without us having guests for Shabbos, despite us being far from any religious or Chassidic center.”

Even learning becomes part of the family fabric. “During camp time, my older sons who study in large yeshivas come to be the ‘counselors’ and directors of the study programs. An amazing combination is created here: my son, a Chabad bachur, learns together with a boy from ‘Chofetz Chaim’ yeshiva who came to help in the summer. They learn Chassidus together, a page of Gemara, and create an achdus that can’t be found anywhere else.”

This atmosphere also affects the distant Jewish community in the area. “We’re not just a summer camp. We’re ‘JLC’ - acronym for ‘Jewish Life Campus.’ People know they have somewhere to come. On holidays and Shabbos the place becomes a bustling center. Suddenly there’s a minyan, there are Shabbos meals that Shira and I prepare with our own hands, because there’s no kosher catering in the entire area, and there’s a feeling of community being built from zero.”

R’ Josh’s vision is to expand this “Shtetl” even more. “The dream is that additional families



Campers collecting honey from a hive

will join us, that the place will grow and be really like in the past - a community that lives from the land, guards Torah values, and are joyfully interdependent. The land is large, the heart is open, and we see every day how the Yad Hashem directs more and more neshamos here who want to be part of this family.”

The Farm and Tractors on the Way to Moshiach

The Tannenbaum family’s shlichus on the Iowa prairies manages to bring about change that extends far beyond the boundaries of the small Jewish community. In the interview he excitedly tells how the non-Jewish neighbors, tough Iowa farmers, become part of the support of the ‘Shtetl.’ “They see the Jewish fire, and they come to tell us: ‘We support you, don’t listen to the background noise in the world.’ When a Jew lives with pride and kindness, when he extends a hand to a neighbor stuck with the heating system in the barn in the middle of the night - this is the first step of

‘Tsaken olam b’malchus Shakai.’ This is the language of Geula.”

The anticipation for Moshiach on the farm is alive and pulsing, to the point that it’s even contagious to the parents of campers who come from the big cities. R’ Josh recalls a moving line from a mother of one of the bachurim: “She saw my son, a Chabad bachur who learns in Tomchei Tmimim, sitting and learning with a boy from a Litvishe yeshiva who came to help in the summer. They ran the camp out of utter Ahavas Yisrael, and she just

stopped and said: ‘Listen, if Moshiach doesn’t come at your farm - I don’t know where else he can come’...”

Toward the end of the interview, I ask him about the moment when everything will change, about the day when the Rebbe will be revealed and we’ll all return to Eretz Yisrael. “Are you ready?” I ask, “Will you go up with your whole farm?”

He smiles. “We’re waiting for it at every moment. I’m 100% ready. With the whole farm, with the horses and tractors - everything will go up to Yerushalayim. Here in Iowa we’re already living now with the feeling of *‘me’ain Olam Haba.’* Everything is calmer, there’s not the crazy race of the city, and you can contemplate the world that the Borei created. We try to be as close as possible to the state of Geula; that the world will be free to engage in only knowing Hashem.” ■

(Special thanks to Benny Zigelbom, the devoted activity director at Camp Shtetl, for his help in facilitating this interview)

The Rebbe's response, several pages long, turned the entire argument around:

“As leaders of the community, it is your responsibility to ensure that South African Jewry should not be a dwindling community. Don't accept the status quo.” He praised the community, highlighted its unique traditional character, and pointed out that strong diaspora communities play a vital role in supporting Eretz Yisrael.

Today the Torah Academy Chabad school system serves six hundred fifty children - the most we have ever had. We have the largest nursery school and kindergarten in the city. New shuls for young families are opening. There is genuine, organic growth. The establishment's five organizations are mostly footnotes. The Rebbe's vision endures.

The Rebbe, Moshiach, and the Message for Today

When the Rebbe told communities not to run, he was not simply offering political analysis or demographic projections. He was speaking from a place of prophetic vision - and he was speaking about Moshiach.

The promise to South African Jewry was not merely “it will be okay.” It was: “It will be good there until Moshiach - and after Moshiach, even better.” The destination the Rebbe had in mind was not a stable government or a favorable election result. It was the Geula Shleima. Every community, every shliach, every Jew who stays put and builds Jewish life in their corner of the world is bringing that destination closer.

This is the context in which the Rebbe saved Crown Heights. This is the context in which the Rebbe saved South African Jewry. We are not simply talking about real estate decisions or immigration patterns. We are talking about

the Rebbe's vision of a world standing on the threshold of Geula - a world in which every Jewish community, in every corner of the globe, plays a role in hastening the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

South Africa today is a remarkable demonstration of this vision. Our government took Israel to the International Court of Justice for alleged genocide - and yet the country itself is not antisemitic. I have walked from my home to shul and back on Friday nights, in the dark, for forty years. I have never had an incident. There is more antisemitism on the streets of New York than on the streets of Johannesburg.

The Rebbe proved prophetic in South Africa. I believe his message for New York today would be identical: Stay right where you are. Build. Grow. And bring Moshiach from exactly where you stand.

As for the current challenges - be it a hostile mayor, or a difficult political climate — there is an old legend that Shlomo HaMelech had a ring inscribed with three Hebrew words: *Gam zeh yaavor* - this too shall pass. He looked at it in hard times for encouragement. He looked at it in good times to stay humble. It is a message for all seasons.

The Rebbe, however, added something Shlomo Hamelech did not say: “And after Moshiach, it will be even better.” May we see that day, *b'karov mamash*. ■

Rabbi Yossy Goldman is the Life Rabbi Emeritus of Johannesburg's Sydenham Shul and President of the South African Rabbinical Association. He and his wife Rochel were sent by the Rebbe to Johannesburg in 1976 as founding director of the first Chabad House on the African continent. The talk transcribed above (with light edits) was delivered at Chabad Lubavitch of Flatbush as part of a speaking tour this past winter



Moments With The Rebbe

Anecdotes



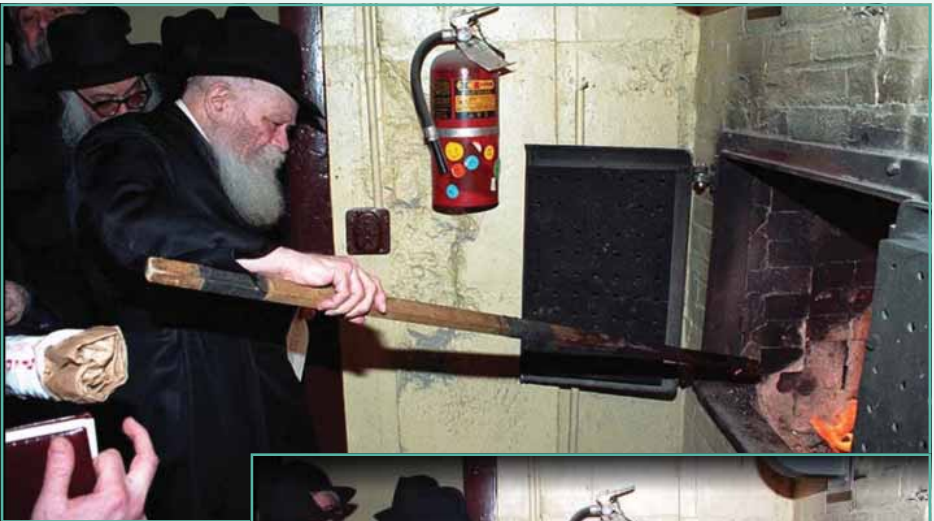
On the morning of 14 Nissan, the Rebbe and the secretaries went to the boiler room in the basement of the Beis Medrash. The secretaries would throw bags into the fire (apparently *panim*) and the Rebbe would throw a small bag or two of chometz that he brought with him. (The handle of the wooden spoon stuck out of the bag and it probably also contained the remnants of the candle and the feather.) Then he took a stick and began moving it in the fire this way and that. When the chometz was burned, he began saying the ‘seder biur chometz’ in a siddur.



The Rebbe did not usually say anything to people after burning the chometz but in a diary from 5711 it says that he said, “*A freilich’n un a kosher’n Pesach. Foon dem chometz iz men shoin patur gevven* (A happy and kosher Pesach. We have gotten rid of the chometz).”



In the diary of “Shnas Hakhel 5741” it says that the recitation of “Kol Chamira” was after throwing the chometz in the fire. Then he stirred the chometz until it was completely burned and then said the “Yehi Ratzon.”



In 5748, the year of mourning for the Rebbetzin *a'h*, the burning of the chometz took place in a barrel in the backyard of the Rebbe's house.





Where is Zeide?

Stories of our Rebbeim and their Chassidim highlighting concepts we learn in the daily Tanya. In this installment - Chapter 37

“You Have Revived the Soul of This Poor Man”

וְגַם מִי שְׂאִינוּ נְהַנֶּה מִיְגִיעוֹ, מְכַל מְקוֹם הוֹאִיל
וּבְמַעוֹת אֱלוֹ הָיָה יְכוֹל לְקַנּוֹת חַיֵּי נַפְשׁוֹ
הַחַיִּינִית, הָרִי נוֹתֵן חַיֵּי נַפְשׁוֹ לָהּ

When one gives to tzedaka money with which he can purchase the needs of his body, he elevates all the vitality of his soul to holiness

Once, a Chassid from the city of Vitebsk came to the Tzemach Tzedek. The residents of Vitebsk were known for their tight-fistedness in matters of tzedaka - they would give food to a poor person, yes, but money for charity was given only under duress. The Chassid told the Rebbe that his only son was about to be drafted into the Russian military, and that particular year the draft conditions were especially harsh - even only sons were being taken. He begged the Rebbe for a blessing for his son, but the Rebbe replied that he could not help him. No amount of pleading changed the answer.

The Chassid went to the Rebbe Maharash, with whom he was close, and told him what had occurred. The Rebbe Maharash went in to his father, the Tzemach Tzedek, and requested a blessing for the Chassid - but received the same answer: “There is nothing I can do.”

Two days before the scheduled draft, the Chassid sent a special messenger to the Rebbe Maharash, who again entered his father’s room and once more asked for a blessing. The Tzemach Tzedek said again: “What do you want of me? I cannot help at all!” He then asked his son to bring him a Medrash Tanchuma. The Rebbe opened it to Parshas Mishpatim, on the verse “If you lend money” - where it is written: “*Malveh Hashem chonen dal* - the one who gives to the poor extends a ‘loan’ to Hashem. Said Rebbe Pinchas HaKohen... the Holy One Blessed is He said: the soul of the poor man was struggling to leave him from starvation, and you gave him sustenance and revived him - I swear that I will repay you, a soul for a soul. Tomorrow your son or daughter may face illness or death, but I will remember the mitzva you performed... for I repay you soul for soul.” The Rebbe Maharash was puzzled as to what his father intended.

Shortly afterward, news came that the Chassid’s son had been released from the draft with no explanation whatsoever. The Tzemach Tzedek was greatly satisfied.

The Rebbe Maharash later needed to travel to Vitebsk to see the Doctor Heibenthal, and asked the wagon driver to stop at the home of that Chassid. When he arrived, he asked the Chassid what had happened on the day of his son’s draft. The Chassid said he didn’t know. The Rebbe Maharash asked him to ask

his wife - and she too said she didn't remember. Then she recalled: that very day, a poor man had come to their door asking for something to eat. At first they told him they were on their way to the cemetery to "tear open the gates of Heaven," and had no time for him. But the poor man insisted - he had not eaten for a long time, he was starving, how could they not give a Jew something to eat? Since in any case they had prepared much food that they themselves couldn't eat given their anguish, they gave the poor man a full meal.

When the Rebbe Maharash heard this, he stopped her and said: "That is already enough..."

(Sefer HaSichos 5702 [Hebrew edition], p. 101)

Painting a Holy Body

אֵלָא רִידְתּוֹ לְעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, לְהַתְלַבֵּשׁ בְּגוּף וְנֶפֶשׁ
הַחַיּוּנִית, הוּא כְּדֵי לְתַקְנָם בְּלִבְד

The soul descends into this world to reveal Divine light within the body

In 5739, the artist Reb Baruch Nachshon traveled to New York with his paintings, and merited that the Rebbe came to view the exhibition he had arranged. The Rebbe spent fifty minutes at the exhibition, and among the things he said was: "You have painted the soul of the Jew beautifully - but a Jew also has a body, and the body too is holy."

(L'tzayer Pnei Rabo - Kfar Chabad Pesach Supplement 5773)

"This is Zeide!"

כְּאֵדָם הַקּוֹרָא לְחַבְרוֹ שְׂיָבֵא אֵלָיו, וְכִבּוֹ קָטוֹ
הַקּוֹרָא לְאָבִיו לְבֵא אֵלָיו

When a Jew studies Torah, it is like a young child calling to his father to come to him.

The Alter Rebbe was once holding his grandson - the young Tzemach Tzedek - on his lap. The child sat in his grandfather's embrace, stroking the holy white beard and murmuring: "Zeide, Zeide!"

The grandfather said to him gently: "But this is the Zeide's beard - it is not the Zeide himself." The child placed his hands on the grandfather's head and said: "This is the Zeide!"

Again the grandfather answered: "That is the Zeide's head - but where is the Zeide himself?" The child moved his hands to the eyes - and received the same answer. Then to the hands, then to the body - but every time the same response came back.

Finally, the child called out: "Zeide!" - and the Alter Rebbe answered with warmth and joy: "Now you have found the Zeide!"

When one calls a name - when one calls out to the person themselves - that is where the essence is found. Not a limb, not a faculty, not an attribute. The name reaches the person in their entirety.

This is the deeper teaching of Tanya - that Torah study is not merely an intellectual exercise, not merely the acquisition of halachic knowledge. It is a calling-out to the Ribono Shel Olam in His entirety. And He, as a Father Who can never truly abandon His child, comes.

(Likkutei Sippurim - Perlov [Ed. 5762] p. 151) ■



Parasha Of The Future

Taste The Final Redemption Now

BEGIN WITH A GRIN

The Egyptian media and government have been in a state of terror these past few weeks. Because if the Israeli army attacked Persia on Purim, imagine what they'll do to Egypt on Pesach...

Redemption Finalized

The Tzemach Tzedek was once asked about a contradiction we find regarding the last days of Pesach - the seventh day of Pesach (and outside of Israel, also the eighth day). On one hand, these are the only Yomim Tovim on which we do not recite the blessing of Shehecheyanu, suggesting they are days unworthy of blessing, as if nothing particularly special occurred on them. On the other hand, the joy experienced on these days far exceeds the joy felt on the first days of Pesach and Chol HaMoed. What is the meaning of this?

[In a humorous vein, some say that on the first days of Pesach it is hard to feel joyful because the stomach is empty... but by the last days of Pesach, those who celebrate Mimouna can already smell the mufleta (Moroccan pancakes) on its way, and even Ashkenazim - and Chabad Chassidim in particular - enjoy eating gebrochts on the last day of Pesach.]

The Tzemach Tzedek answered: The first days of Pesach symbolize the Geula from Egypt, while the last days of Pesach symbolize

the future Geula yet to come. The joy of the Egyptian Geula was certainly very great - how could it be otherwise? After 210 years of bondage and enslavement, finally leaving exile - clearly there was much to celebrate. But in the future Geula, the joy will be doubled and multiplied many times over. Can you imagine the depth of joy after so many years of exile and suffering, after so many persecutions and destructions, may we be spared? Everyone understands that the greatest joy in history will be at the complete Geula. And since the last days of Pesach symbolize the future Geula, these days are experienced with many times more joy than the Seder night and the other nights of Chol HaMoed.

Yet the question still remains - why, then, do we not recite Shehecheyanu on the seventh (and eighth) day of Pesach?

In a remarkable sicha (Likutei Sichos vol. 2 p. 545; Likutei Sichos vol. 37, sicha for the last days of Pesach), the Rebbe plumbs the depth of this matter at length - first with a thorough halachic explanation, and then with an inspiring explanation based on Chassidus.

We will present the essence of the Chassidic explanation below.

The last days of Pesach can be viewed in two entirely different ways.

On one hand, the seventh day of Pesach represents the completion and culmination of the Geula from Egypt. Evidence for this: on the seventh day of Pesach, G-d split the Yam Suf [Sea of Reeds] for the Jewish people, and as a result, all the Egyptian forces drowned in the sea, and the children of Israel were freed from Egyptian fear forever. The Geula that began on the 15th of Nissan reached its completion on the 7th of Pesach - for on the 15th of Nissan, the first day of Pesach, the Jewish people left Egypt physically, but they remained under a terrifying dread: "What will happen?" "What will tomorrow bring?" Their bodies had left Mitzrayim, but their minds and thoughts were focused on "Egypt," on the approaching Egyptian army. (A parallel: like how we follow the developments in Tehran and Lebanon every day... that's not exactly "complete Geula," is it?) Only on the 7th of Pesach, when the Egyptians drowned in the sea and the Egyptian threat ceased to hang over their heads, was the Exodus from Egypt truly complete - their minds stopped thinking about Pharaoh, and their thoughts were no longer focused on the news... (may it be so for us!)

Redemption Grand Finale

On the other hand, the seventh (and eighth) day of Pesach can be seen in an entirely different light. The seventh day of Pesach is a foretaste of the complete and ultimate Geula. Just as regarding the complete Geula it is said: "I will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth" and evil will no longer have existence, so

too at the splitting of the Sea it is said: "Not one of them remained" - and the Egyptian force of evil was completely nullified. This is also one of the reasons why the third Mikdash - about which it says, "the sanctuary, O L-rd, which Your hands established," the Mikdash made by G-d Himself and destined to stand forever - is alluded to specifically in the Song of the Sea. For at that moment, the Jewish people were worthy of the complete Geula and the Third Mikdash.

We thus find that the seventh day of Pesach contains within it two opposites. On one hand, it is a symbol of the completion of the Geula from Egypt; on the other hand, it is an allusion to the complete Geula. And therefore - we do not recite Shehecheyanu on it!

What is the connection? And how does this resolve the question?

If the seventh day of Pesach is (only) the conclusion of the Exodus from Egypt, then there is no reason to recite Shehecheyanu again - for (in the words of the Rambam) "he has already blessed over the time at the beginning of Pesach." He already blessed over the Geula from Egypt at the Seder, so why bless again over the same Geula?

On the other hand, if the seventh (and eighth) day of Pesach are a foretaste of the true and complete Geula, then this is a Geula over which we have not yet blessed - and it would seem fitting to recite a special blessing on the wonderful novelty of the complete Geula. For this Geula will be incomparably greater than the Geula from Egypt, and it warrants its own blessing. If so, why don't we make the bracha?

Now we return to the story with the Tzemach Tzedek with which we began. The

Tzemach Tzedek answered: The blessing of Shehecheyanu can only be recited over a joy that is felt in the flesh of one's heart, and such joy can only exist when one sees (and feels) with physical eyes (and a physical heart) that which one is blessing over. Since we do not yet see the complete Geula, we cannot yet recite Shehecheyanu. But the great joy of the complete Geula can and must be felt already now - even if it cannot yet be formally blessed with G-d's name and kingship, one must internalize and live with the feeling of joy from the Geula already now. And through this, we will soon be able to say with full mouths (as the Rebbe mentioned at the conclusion of the well-known farbrengen on Shabbos Parshas Tazria-Metzora 5751): "to give thanks and recite a blessing upon the birth and revelation of Moshiach - *Shehecheyanu v'kiyemanu v'higianu lizman hazeh.*"

[It is interesting to note that the topic of not reciting Shehecheyanu on the last days of Pesach was discussed year after year at the Yom Tov meals of the Chabad Rebbeim throughout the generations, each time from a different angle.]

To Conclude With A Story

We will end with a story that the Rebbe Rayatz told on the first Acharon Shel Pesach after his arrival in the United States.

On the last day of Pesach in the year 5625 (1865), the Rebbe Rashab and his older brother, Reb Zalman Aharon, sat eating the Yom Tov meal at their father's table - that of the Rebbe Maharash. The Rebbe Rashab, who was then about four years old, asked his father: "Why is the last day of Pesach a Yom Tov?" The Rebbe Maharash turned to the older brother, Reb Zalman Aharon, and said: "Zalman Aharon, perhaps you can answer the question?" But Reb Zalman Aharon, who was about five or six years old, also did not know.

The eldest sister, Devorah Leah, was sitting beside her mother, the Rebbetzin Rivka, and said that she knew. The Rebbe Maharash said: "If you know, then say it!"

Devorah Leah said: When the Jewish people observe the seven days of Pesach properly and guard themselves from chometz, they make the last day of Pesach into a Yom Tov. The Jewish people are joyful that they got through Pesach without transgressing the serious prohibition of chometz on Pesach. The Rebbe Maharash was very pleased with the answer and told his daughter: "Devorah Leah, you have a good head."

The Rebbe Maharash related this to his own father, the Tzemach Tzedek. The Tzemach Tzedek called the children over and said to them: ... the last day of Pesach is our holiday - for the ultimate Geula, when G-d will redeem us... through Moshiach Tzidkeinu. The first day of Pesach is the day of joy of Moshe Rabbeinu, and the last day of Pesach is the day of joy of Moshiach.

A similar story, the Rebbe Rayatz continued, occurred in the year 5666 (1906). The Rebbe Rashab entered the library at the beginning of the night of the last day of Pesach, and heard a heated debate among his daughters (the daughters of the Rebbe Rayatz) coming from the adjacent dining room. The older sister, Chana, argued that the last day of Pesach is a holiday like all other holidays, while the younger one - the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka - argued that the last day of Pesach is not a holiday like all other holidays, and the proof is that at the candle-lighting, we do not recite Shehecheyanu. This reminded me, concluded the Rebbe Rashab, of the entire episode that took place in 5625.

It was specifically the Rebbetzin, who felt the wonderful *chiddush* of the last day of Pesach and its connection to the complete Geula. ■

Good Shabbos and a Happy and Kosher Pesach!

3 We cannot celebrate fifteen hundred issues with a full heart - not yet. We absolutely need to give thanks and feel the weight of the tremendous *zechus* that comes with the role we fill. But *zechus* is, first and foremost, a responsibility - “not everyone who wishes to take the name may take it.” If we have already had the *zechus* fifteen hundred times to carry the great and holy name Beis Moshiach, without any addition; if fifteen hundred times the image of the Rebbe MH”M has graced the front cover; if fifteen hundred times we have declared ourselves a publication of *emuna*, *shlichus*, and the *Besuras HaGeula* - then that obligates us seven-fold, or more precisely, fifteen-hundred-fold.

So the real celebration has to wait until the job is done. We cannot rest on the accomplishment of putting out an issue every week - as genuinely difficult as that is for any weekly publication, and in our case, one that requires far more than ordinary effort. Because getting the issue out is not the goal. It is only the means.

4 Fifteen hundred issues spanning more than thirty years - through countless events, pivotal and historic, affecting the moment and the generations, across the entire world, in Eretz Yisrael, and among the Jewish people. Issues in which we covered and engaged with everything happening in Beis Moshiach and its extended community, the world of Chabad-Lubavitch, and the work of Moshiach throughout the world - all of it aimed at one single goal.

Every news item, column, feature, and article that appears on this platform - and just as much, the things that are decided not

to publish - must be measured, beyond their own content and style, beyond the interest they generate and all the other ‘professional’ and even moral considerations, against the goal we have set for ourselves: “spreading the *Besuras HaGeula*.”

5 This fifteen-hundredth issue comes out in the days surrounding Yud-Alef Nissan - the Rebbe’s birthday. When Moshe Rabbeinu was born, the Medrash tells us, the entire house filled with light. That light was so real, so powerful, that it overrode everything that came after - even the very *histalkus* of Moshe, “The day of birth is sufficient to compensate for the day of death.” Once that light enters the world, it doesn’t go out. Haman knew Moshe had died in Adar. What he failed to account for was that Moshe had been born in Adar - and that changes everything.

The Rebbe is that light in our generation. The soul of Moshe, the *Goel Rishon*, the first redeemer, carries forward all the way to our generation through the Rebbe Moshiach Tzidkeinu, the *Goel Acharon*, the ultimate redeemer. We are certain of this, because our generation is the *dor ha’acharon*, the final generation of *galus* and first of *Geula*.

When Beis Moshiach comes into your home, it brings that light with it. And a home filled with that light becomes, in its own way, a Beis Moshiach - a place the Rebbe can walk into, a home he would feel at home in. That is what we have been working toward, one issue at a time, for fifteen hundred issues. And we will not stop for even a moment.

We will do everything we can, and we will look for new and additional ways to act - but the conclusion, the beginning, and the end will always be:

**YECHI ADONEINU MOREINU V’RABEINU
MELECH HA’MOSHIACH L’OLAM VA’ED. ■**

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