

# EMISSARIES



STORIES,  
THOUGHTS,  
AND MUSINGS  
ON THE REBBE'S SHLICHUS  
AND THE ONES WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN

*Memento from the Wedding of  
Doví and Devorah Leah  
Paltiel*

*21 Adar, 5783 - 14 March, 2023*

A memento from the wedding of Dovi & Devorah Leah Paltiel  
21 Adar 5783 - March 14th 2023  
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# Introduction

Hello, and thank you so much for joining in our simcha!

As beautiful as a wedding is, it becomes even more special when it's shared with family and friends; we deeply appreciate everyone who was able to make it—from Florida, California, and everywhere in between!

One of the traditions often practiced at Chassidic weddings is the distribution of a tshura—a sort of takeaway gift for the attendees. The tshura typically consists of Torah thoughts on a particular topic, previously-unpublished letters from the Rebbe, or other such tidbits for the guests to enjoy.

When we set out to formulate our own tshura, we naturally gravitated to a topic which has, to a large extent, shaped our identities: Shlichus.

Both of us were given the privilege to grow up as shluchim—emissaries of the Rebbe, entrusted with the mission of bringing the warmth and vibrance of Judaism to our fellow Jews.

To us, shlichus wasn't simply our parents' jobs; it was a weltanschauung, a lens with which to view the world and our place in it.

Friday night meals weren't just about getting the family together for a delicious meal; they were a chance to share the uncomplicated, authentic beauty of Shabbat with Jews who never experienced it before. Every family outing, every trip to the store, was an opportunity to find unaffiliated Jews and connect with them.

As we grew older, we began to understand how unique this perspective was. And as we went out into the world, meeting people from other backgrounds and other upbringings, we began to grasp how much the Rebbe had enriched our lives with the gift and responsibility of being his representatives.

And we realized, too, how wonderful it would be to share this perspective with others.



In the coming pages, you will find a compilation of stories, anecdotes, and excerpts that have inspired us. As you read them, we hope to give you a glimpse into the world of the Rebbe's shlichus: the tenacity and the tenuity, the challenge and the triumph. Perhaps most importantly, we hope to share with you the *attitudes* - the perspectives and convictions that fuel the engine of shlichus.

\* \* \*

In countless talks and letters, the Rebbe reminded us all that *every* Jew is a shliach. Each of us is given a mandate by G-d, a mission to fulfill in this world. He weaves the tapestry of our lives each moment, directing our every step, placing us precisely where we need to be to carry out our mission.

We hope that this little booklet inspires each of you in your own shlichus, wherever life takes you; and may we all very soon merit to witness the coming of Moshiach, the final redemption, when we will see our beloved Rebbe once again!

*Sincerely,*  
*Dovi & Devorah Leah*



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*“What Galaxy Are  
You Living In?”*

*Elokus B’pshitus,  
Velt Behischadshus*

*Aunt Miriam never had an easy life.*

*Together with her two brothers, she lost her mother at a young age; in the years to come, she would endure numerous other trials and personal losses.*

*On one occasion, she went in to a private audience with the Rebbe and poured out her broken heart.*

*The Rebbe listened patiently, then gently reminded her of the Talmudic teaching “kol man de’avid Rachmana letav avid,” all that G-d does, He does for the good.*

*Miriam had doubtless heard this adage before; in all likelihood, she’d shared it with others in their time of need. At this moment, however, she found little comfort in it.*

*“Who says?” she quietly asked.*

*The Rebbe smiled warmly, and replied simply: “**Ich** zog.”*

***I** say.*

*And, somehow, that was enough.*

*\* \* \**

*Since I first heard this story, I’ve mulled over the Rebbe’s response dozens of times.*

*“**I** say.”*

*It’s not a very scholarly answer. It’s not profound, persuasive, or even particularly inspiring.*

*So what was it?*

*In time, however, I understood:*

*It was a window into the world as the Rebbe saw it—a world infinitely distant from our mundane reality, a world where G-d’s goodness is vivid, obvious, undeniable.*

*For just a moment, Aunt Miriam was given a glance through that window.*

*And she was calmed.*

## What Is Real?

One of the wry observations often made by Chassidim speaks to our habitual tendency to see “*olamos b’pshitus, Elokus behischadshus.*” We perceive the physical world as undeniable reality, and G-dliness as abstract.

To our eyes, a loaf of bread is *real*. A paycheck is *real*. A project deadline is *real*. G-d’s providence, on the other hand...That’s in the books. It’s nice enough in the Rabbi’s weekly email, or even as a speech (after a good opening joke, of course)...but it’s not *real*.

The truth, Chassidim would remark, is the exact opposite: G-d’s energy is the *only* real existence. That mundane loaf of bread, that physical paycheck...*those* are abstract. They’re significant enough, in their own way...but they aren’t *real*. They don’t determine our true priorities, and most importantly, they don’t—they *can’t*—get between us and our Creator.

This second perspective, “*Elokus b’pshitus, velt behischadshus*”—seeing G-dliness as obvious truth, and *physicality* as an abstraction—is the bedrock of shlichus, and one of the great gifts the Rebbe gives us.

It’s what gives a pair of inexperienced newlyweds the conviction to walk into a spiritual desert, set down their suitcases, look around, and confidently proclaim “Here! This very spot! This is where G-d is.”





## A Lease, A Loan, And A Letter

A quick Google search on “how to prepare for a council meeting” will swiftly return a number of very sensible suggestions from self-proclaimed internet experts:

“Wear a tie!” cry the fine fellows at boardsource.com.

“Brush your teeth,” onboardmeetings.org solemnly admonishes.

“Avoid PowerPoint at all costs!” crow the worthy pundits of r/boardmeetings.

Very few internet experts, however, recommend bringing one of your kids along.

Even fewer would recommend bringing *all* your kids along.

And perhaps nobody would advise opening your presentation by proposing to purchase a municipal building that is not yet for sale.

Shluchim, however, do not build their careers on internet experts.

And that was why, one sunny winter day in Laguna Niguel, California, Rabbi Mendy Paltiel found himself striding into an assembly of the Moulton Niguel Water District’s administrative board, kids in tow, to buy a building that was not for sale.

\* \* \*

The story of the water building had begun a few short years after Rabbi Mendy and Kreinie Paltiel first set down their roots in Laguna Niguel.

As many shluchim do, they began hosting their first services in the living room of their home; two years later, they relocated to a 2,000 square foot leased space. The plan had always been to one day purchase a permanent home for Chabad in Laguna Niguel; now, as the years passed and community involvement burgeoned exponentially, the need for a more expansive space became increasingly clear.

From the very beginning, the most tantalizing option had also been the most unrealistic: The Moulton Niguel Water District building.

In a city with rigorous and inflexible zoning ordinances, finding a property that could house a religious center was a formidable challenge. Finding one for *sale* was like finding a needle in a haystack. And standing out amongst the crowd of eager buyers would be something akin to lighting the haystack on fire.

It was no surprise, then, that the water building attracted the Paltiel's attention from the start. Centrally located at one of the town's busiest intersections, and with the required zoning for a house of worship, the 12,000 square foot edifice would be ideal...

...if only it hadn't been occupied.

Which, unfortunately, it very much was—by no less an establishment than the Moulton Niguel Water District itself, which services Laguna Niguel and a number of neighboring cities. There wasn't much the Paltiels could do other than gaze wistfully at the building as they walked to Chabad's rented space, located directly across the road. Over several years of searching, many alternate locations were floated; none materialized.

With such a pronounced shortage of options, it was no wonder that Rabbi Patiel's ears perked up when a friend of Chabad passed on the rumor that *maybe*, sometime in the future, the water district would be moving to a state-of-the-art building closer to the town's municipal



*The MNWD building, shortly after being vacated*



*The building's prime location on one of Laguna Niguel's major crossroads center; it was no wonder, either, that the possibility of the current building being placed on the open market set Rabbi Paltiel's brain whirring.*

Not one to waste time, he checked the calendar for the next meeting of the district's board. *Perfect*, he thought—there was one scheduled for just a few days later. As he began the process of reserving a time slot to address the board, a bit of a wrinkle arose: The meeting would take place around the same time as the International Chabad Shluchos Convention in Crown Heights... which meant that his wife Kreinie would be out of town at the time...

...which, in turn, meant finding a reliable babysitter. Several fruitless inquiries later, however, an executive order was made, somewhat out of necessity: the young Paltiel kids would be coming along to the meeting, providing moral support as their father made his big pitch.

Sure enough, the Paltiel gang trooped into the boardroom as the meeting began. Single handedly, the children brought the average age in the room several decades down; fortunately, the council members found them adorable.

Allotted five minutes to speak, Rabbi Paltiel surprised the board by raising the subject of the current building's sale.

“For quite a few years, Chabad has been the only entity to service the Jewish community of this city,” he began. “We’ve outgrown our current space, and the facility that the district currently occupies would be ideal for our Jewish Center.”

A quick glance at the council showed some interested expressions and jotting of notes. Encouraged, Rabbi Paltiel forged on with his preemptive request.

“Think of it this way,” he proposed. “The Moulton Niguel Water District services the people of Laguna Niguel. Chabad does the same. How fitting would it be for this building, with so many years of service behind it, to be put to good use in the same vein?”

“Should this building go on the market,” he concluded, “please consider us—an organization that will continue to use it for the good of this wonderful community—as a viable candidate for its purchase.”

The committee was duly impressed (as much by the Rabbi’s well-behaved children as by his pitch) but when the building was finally vacated a year later, the exciting opportunity came with a significant wrinkle.

“They’re refusing to consider the option of sale,” Rabbi Paltiel’s realtor informed him. “The property is too valuable, and they’ve determined that, as members of the board, it’s their duty to generate as much revenue as possible for the district.”

“So what do they have in mind?” asked the Rabbi, somewhat confused.

“They want to lease the building,” the realtor explained. “A twenty-five year lease, for close to double the building’s value. That way, when the lease is up...”

“...they can sell it, or lease it again,” Rabbi Paltiel finished, wrinkling his brow.

“Exactly.”

The arrangement was absurd, and Rabbi Paltiel knew there was no



way Chabad's supporters would throw their money behind such a transient venture. On the other hand, with multiple private businesses expressing interest in the lease, it seemed impossible that the district would consider relinquishing ownership of the building.

Impossible, that is, according to the laws of nature.

When he arrived home, Rabbi Paltiel sat down to pen one of his many letters to the Rebbe. In meticulous detail, he laid out the advantages of the building—its location, size, visibility, and the interest the board had shown in Chabad's work.

"Rebbe," he wrote. "Above all, please let me have clarity. If this is not meant to be Chabad's new home, let it become clear to me; and if it is, let that, too, be clear beyond all doubt."

Over the next week, Rabbi Paltiel wrote letter after letter, apprising the Rebbe of his progress. Letter after letter, he made the same simple request: *Clarity*.

And somehow, somewhat suddenly, clarity came.

"From a da'as tachton, a worldly perspective," Rabbi Paltiel recalled later, "there was no change in the situation. The thought of getting the building was daunting, the thought of gathering the money for the



Rabbi Paltiel meets with MNWD representatives

down payment was daunting, the thought of negotiating the mortgage was daunting...but for some reason I became absolutely sure that this is Chabad's building. It felt as if all the arrows were pointing in that direction...as if this was the true reality, and it was going to happen no matter how unlikely it seemed."



*Writing to the Rebbe on  
the day of closing*

With his newfound conviction, Rabbi Paltiel and an influential Chabad supporter met with a number of MNWD's representatives. Patiently, he listened as they outlined their lease plan.

When they finished, he looked them straight in the eye and said: "This is not going to work."

Across the table, eyebrows shot up. As far as they were concerned, this Rabbi was attending the meeting to lay out an offer for a lease, not challenge the very premise of leasing.

"Nobody will invest this kind of money—millions upon millions of dollars—only to be left with nothing at the termination of the lease."

"Rabbi," one of the lawyers broke in. "This is a moot point. We've had several offers from interested lessees!"

"Oh?" Rabbi Paltiel turned to him. "And what happened with those?"

The lawyer hemmed. "For one reason or another...well, that is to say, none of them materialized."

"Precisely." Like a mantra, the message flashed through Rabbi Paltiel's head: *This is our building. This is the building the Rebbe will help us acquire. Now we've just got to work out the details.*

"Listen," he concluded with finality "I'm well aware of this property's value, and thank G-d, Chabad and its supporters are capable of raising

the necessary funds—but as a purchase, not a lease.”

The next three months were ones of silent anticipation. It had been a bold gamble, refusing the prospect of a lease outright; it left the door wide open for someone else to swoop in and take this desirable property on the district’s terms. As he’d requested of the Rebbe, however, the choice had indeed been crystal clear: A lease was untenable; the only option was to trust that, with G-d’s help and the Rebbe’s brachos, the building would be theirs.

It almost came as no surprise, then, when Chabad’s realtor received a call from the district. As the Rabbi had predicted, not even a *single* investor had managed to submit a workable leasing arrangement; now, quietly, the door had opened for sale.

Throughout the months that followed, there were many ups and downs to contend with: There was a bidding war to be won, a mortgage to be obtained, large sums of money to be raised in a short period of time, and many other hurdles, big and small.

The Rebbe’s brachos were apparent every step of the way. Impossibly, Rabbi Paltiel’s bid won out over a number of other bidders, several of whom were loudly clamoring to purchase the building in one fell swoop—cash on the table—saving the district the risk of the



*Keys exchange hands!*

mortgage process falling through. Then, after finally securing the hard-won verbal agreement to sell, the Rabbi was faced with the difficult task of finagling enough time to raise the 2.2 million dollars required for the down payment.

After the Rabbi's request for an extended escrow period (an almost unthinkable ninety days) was reluctantly granted, he got to work scheduling dozens of meetings with supporters, laying out Chabad's vision for the purchase of the property and its development.



*A dream come true:  
Chabad's emblem stands proudly  
above the front entrance*

Reams upon reams of letters flew from the Paltiels to the Rebbe in those months; throughout it all, the clarity never wavered.

As Chabad's impossible dream began to materialize, it felt as if tangible reality was finally catching up with the true reality—the reality in which the Rebbe's influence holds sway, and in which a prime location in the center of town *must belong to Chabad*.

And so when, at long last, the representative of the Moulton Niguel Water District solemnly dropped the keys into Rabbi

Paltiel's hand, it felt as if two dissonant worlds were finally harmonizing, coming together.

As Rabbi Mendy and Kreinie Paltiel took their first steps into the vaulted foyer of their recently-acquired Chabad center, a new chapter began for the Jews of Laguna Niguel.

And for Jews everywhere, the whole world took one big step towards Moshiach.



## “I’ve Seen Him...”

A rather simple-minded chassid once entered into a private audience with the Tzemach Tzedek, the third Rebbe of Chabad.

“Rebbe!” the chassid lamented. “I’m having a crisis! I’m no longer certain that G-d exists! I’ve never seen Him...how can I be sure He’s real!?”

The Tzemach Tzedek peered at him, then replied with a question of his own.

“Do you believe the Czar exists?”

“Oh yes,” the chassid replied with confidence. “The Czar exists.”

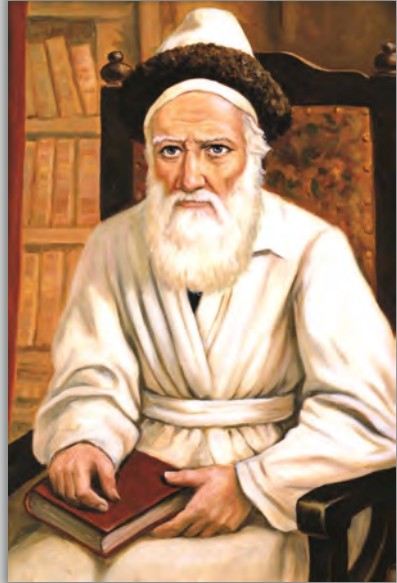
“You mean you’ve seen him in person?”

“Well...no,” admitted the chassid, “but my brother has, and he told me all about it—and my brother’s no liar!”

“Tell me,” the Tzemach Tzedek asked with a twinkle in his eye. “Am I a liar?”

The chassid was aghast. “I would never suspect the Rebbe of such a thing!”

“Well then,” rejoined the Tzemach Tzedek, “you can believe me: there is a G-d. I’ve seen Him.”



*The Tzemach Tzedek*

# *“Who Do You Think You Are?”*

*The Chutzpah Of Shlichus*

*Near the close of Tractate Sotah, the Gemara records a grim prediction for the era immediately preceding the coming of Moshiach:*

*“As the footsteps of Moshiach [draw close],” the Talmud foretells, “chutzpah - impudence - will become rampant...”*

*In the nearly two thousand years since it was recorded by the sages, this enigmatic prophecy has been seen through many lenses. Generations of scholars have speculated on its exact meaning. Some darkly questioned how Judaism could withstand such a hostile climate; others observed the upheavals of their own time and found a grim kind of hope in the Talmud's words.*

*Until the Rebbe, however, perhaps no one thought to seriously question whether it was, in fact, a negative prediction at all...*

## The Chutzpah to Teach

*Igrot Kodesh, Vol. 7, Pg. 9*

ג) ובהתאם לשיעורים הנ"ל וליופי העבודה הנה כבר נדבר בהתועדות שע"ד המבואר בדא"ח ובפרט בלקו"ת אשר הענינים הלא טובים הכתובים בפ' בחקתי ופ' תבא הם באמת ברכות, הנה עד"ז הוא ג"כ בענין הברייתא דסוף מס' סוטה, ומהענינים אשר שם, דבעקבתא דמשיחא חוצפא יסגי כו' נערים פני זקנים ילבינו, בת קמה באמה וכו', אשר בעבודת השם הוא, שמבלי הבט על החשבון שלו במעמדו ומצבו וגם בנוגע ענינים הפשוטים דמחדו"מ, הנה יש לו הרוחב (די ברייטקייט) שנעשה למשפיע מעורר ומורה דרך בסביבתו לא רק בנוגע לדינים וכו' אלא גם בדרכי החסידות והנהגתם ולא רק בנוגע ללמוד נגלה דתורה אלא גם בנוגע ללימוד נסתר דתורה ורזין דרזין – אשר ג"כ נכלל ונתבאר בתורת החסידות, ולא עוד אלא שגם אלה שקנו חכמה זו תורה אבל עד עתה לא זכו עדיין למאור שבתורה זוהי תורת החסידות, והוא עצמו עדיין נער וכו' הנה נערים פני זקנים ילבינו, ולא עוד אלא שבביתו עצמו, הנה אם מאיזה סיבה שתהי' נהגו קולא באיזה ענינים מפני תנאי החיים לפנים, הנה בת קמה באמה וכלה בחמותה ונוהגים עצמן כדבעי גם בענינים אלו מבלי התחשב עם הנהגות אמן וחמותן עד עתה, וסו"ס חנה גם האמהות והחמות יתנהגו כמותן וד"ל. והשי"ת יזכנו בעגלא דידן שנראה בעיני בשר איך שיהפוך ה"א לך את הקללה לברכה כי אהבך ה"א.

בברכת חנוכה שמח.



*Free Translation:*

“...The concept which we’ve discussed in the farbrengens—that [even] the negative events predicted in the Torah portions of Bechukosai and Ki Tavo are, in truth, blessings—applies as well to the teachings that appear at the end of Tractate Sotah. One such teaching [predicts] that in the era of ‘the footsteps of Moshiach,’ impudence will become rampant...that young men will shame their elders, and daughters will rise up [rebelliously] against their mothers.

“[This teaches us a lesson] in our service of G-d: Regardless of any self-evaluations one may perform, [which show him to be deficient] in his own spiritual standing—even in basic areas of thought, speech, and action—one should still have the ‘impudence’ and presumptuousness, so to speak, to positively influence those around him.

“This influence shouldn’t be limited to teaching the basic laws of Judaism; he should also share the ways and customs of Chassidus as well—not just as they pertain to the revealed parts of Torah, but even to the deepest secrets as well!

“...Despite the fact that [the ones he is influencing] may be older and wiser...while he himself is still a ‘young man,’ [he should share with them] the teachings of Chassidus, ‘the light of Torah,’ which they have not had the privilege to know...[Thus, he fulfills in a positive sense] the prediction that ‘young men will ‘shame’ their elders’.”

# **The Chutzpah to Grow**

*The Letter and the Spirit, Vol. 3, Pg. 70*

By the Grace of G-d

2nd Day of Chanukah, 5726

Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter. You write about the difficulties which a teacher encounters in view of the fact that there is no cooperation on the part of the parents, and there are some members in the community who look askance on religious education of this high caliber.

It is surely unnecessary to emphasize to you at length that this is not anything new, unfortunately. On the contrary, Jews have always been a minority and they never enjoyed the assistance of the environment, nor always the assistance of fellow Jews. However, it is certain that when a Jew goes in the way which has been prescribed by G-d, and reflecting on the fact that in this way one walks with G-d all the time, one comes to the realization that insofar as spiritual strength is concerned, a Jew is never in the minority.

As for the question why should G-d desire that a Jew should find it difficult to follow the right path, none of us can fathom the ways of G-d. Certain it is, however, that there is only one way for a Jew to follow, this is the right way, namely the way of G-d. Hence, I do not agree with your expression that you are fighting a "losing battle" or the like, G-d forbid. I may add that there is something rather encouraging in our generation, and that is that we see many cases where it is through the influence of children that parents return to the greater adherence to the Jewish way of life. This reflects "one of the signs of our pre-Moshiach" age, which our Sages of old have told us, namely that "A daughter shall rebel against her mother." And although from one point of view this appears to be rather negative, it also has a positive side. This is in the case where the parents unfortunately have failed to

adhere to the Jewish way of life, when it is a very positive thing for children to “rebel” against their parents by their readiness to make a complete change from the direction of their home towards complete adherence to the Torah and mitzvos, thereby also taking their parents along with them in the same direction.

In light of the above it becomes very clear why it is so necessary to instill into the children the utmost measure of the proper influence, all the more so since that is when they are at a most impressionable age. In addition to the fact that this is the right thing to do, it being one of the greatest duties and privileges that a Jew can have, every day, hour and minute are precious, since one cannot know which is the right moment when the child is most prone to accept and respond to the right influence. It is surely unnecessary to elaborate on this...

Wishing you a happy and inspiring Chanukah.

With blessing,

## The Chutzpah To Speak Out

At the conclusion of Tractate Sukkah, the Talmud recounts several penalties that were imposed on the House of Bilga, one of the priestly families which existed during the times of the Second Holy Temple.

According to one opinion cited there, the reason for these penalties—which endured for centuries—was because of one single incident:

A particularly notorious scion of the family, Miriam bas Bilga, left the Jewish faith and married an officer of the Greek forces who occupied Israel at the time. At one point, this officer and his platoon raided the Holy Temple, violating the most sacred space of the Jewish people. Miriam unabashedly accompanied her husband in this act, and exceeded even his brazenness by climbing atop the holy altar, striking it with her shoe, and calling out:

*“Wolf, wolf! How long will you consume the Jewish people’s resources”—referring to the daily burnt-offerings, which were funded by the community—“and fail to stand by them in their time of distress?!”*

This act of shameless disgrace was not soon forgotten. The Rabbinical authorities of Miriam’s day saw it as indicative of a failing in the entire dynasty’s moral fiber; in the Talmud’s words, “the language a child uses in the marketplace [i.e., publicly] can be attributed to [the conduct] of his mother or father.” This was why the entire priestly family was penalized.

In a talk given on the 6th of Tishrei, 5735 (1974), the Rebbe discussed Miriam bas Bilga’s story, highlighting the life-altering impact that parents’ behavior has on their children’s character. “If Miriam’s parents had only set a better example for her,” the Rebbe pointed out, “this whole tragedy, and its negative repercussions on the entire family for generations, could have been avoided”.

Particularly, the Rebbe encouraged Jewish mothers to light Shabbat candles on Friday night, and train their daughters to begin lighting from the age of three.



נוסף על הענין, אז טאמער איז דא א הויז וואס דערוויילע (מאיזה סיבה שחיה) איז די מוסער נאך נישט מדליק נורות, איז דאס בדוגמא ווי מ'זאגט אז איידער משיח וועט קומען, וועט זיין "והשיב לב אבות על בנים" און ווי רש"י טייטשט אפ - "אבות ע"י בנים", ער"ז איז אמהות - מוסערס - ע"י בנות. וואס דאס איז דאך איינע פון די ברכות וואס די גמרא איז כסיום אין סוטה, אז בה קמה באימא כלה בחמותה,

איז דאך פארשטאנדיק, ע"ד ווי דער אלטער רבי און צ"צ זיינען כבאר, אז אלע ענינים וואס שטייען אין פ' כי תבוא און פ' בחקוהי, איז דאס א ענין וואס לאזט זיך אויס ווי ער זאגט אין פ' נצבים "על אויבך ועל שונאך אשר רדפוך" ס'איז דאך אבער אין מקדא יוצא מדי פשוט - אז דאס מיינט מען דעם אידן אליין, איז מען מפרש, אז דאס איז א ברכה וואס זי איז געזאגט געווארן אין אזא מין אופן כדי עס זאל נישט שאטן, (ווי ער איז מבאר אין לקו"ה די פרסי הדברים),

ע"ד ווי מ'זעה אז דוקא בדורנו זה, האט זיך דאס אויסגעלאזן לברכה ולמעלוותה, אז בה קמה באמא - אז די טאכטער איז פרימער ווי די מוסער, און כלה בחמותה - א שנור איז פרימער ווי די שוויגער,

און נישט דאס בריינגט ח"ו צו פירוד, נאר סוכ"ס ווערט דער הגברת הרוחניות על הגשמיות, און עס ווערט דער והשיב לב אבות על בנים, ולב אמהות ע"י בנות, ועד"ז כלה בחמותה.

"...and if a Jewish girl is brought up in a home where, for whatever reason, her mother does not yet light Shabbat candles," the Rebbe continued, "then, as it says regarding the times preceding Moshiach's coming, 'the hearts of the fathers will be brought back [to G-d] through their sons', which of course applies to daughters as well..."

"This is also [reflected in] one of the blessings with which the Talmud concludes Tractate Sotah," the Rebbe concludes, "That 'a daughter will rise up [rebelliously] against her mother.' In our times, this is coming true in a positive sense: Uniquely, in our generation, daughters are becoming more observant than their mothers...not in a manner which causes conflict, but rather in a way which ultimately elevates the entire family."

\* \* \*

Later in the evening, the Rebbe once again returned to the topic of Miriam bas Bilga. To the astonishment of many, his words took on a tone that no other sage or commentator had ever adopted before: He began *advocating* on her behalf.

For over two thousand years, Miriam bas Bilga had been looked upon as the lowest kind of traitor—someone with utter disdain for her own people, someone who willingly and gleefully took part in the unspeakable desecration of the holiest place in the world...and yet,



defying this millennia-old perception—in what many saw as a kind of scholarly chutzpah—the Rebbe spoke out on Miriam’s behalf:



Scan this QR  
code to hear the  
Rebbe’s talk

“Look at what a Jewish child is!” the Rebbe exclaimed. “Despite the fact that she married an officer of the army that was waging war on the Jewish people, the force that conquered Jerusalem and the Holy Temple...and despite the fact that she herself *accompanied* him, associating herself with him—despite all this, what was it that bothered her!? That the altar was not protecting the Jewish people!”

As the chassidim present at the gathering listened spellbound, the Rebbe broke out in tears.

“She gave up her religion,” the Rebbe continued, “and married a Greek soldier...but when she saw the desperate situation her fellow Jews were in, she cried out in pain: ‘*Wolf, wolf! Why don’t you help the Jewish people!?*’”

Not everyone approved of the Rebbe's unconventional approach to Miriam's story; at a subsequent gathering, the Rebbe addressed their concerns. But the Chassidim who were present that day, many of whom were—or would become—shluchim across the world, gleaned more than an interesting Talmudic insight from the Rebbe's words.

They were given a glimpse of a Nasi, a leader of the Jewish people, who concerns himself with the wellbeing of every single Jewish soul, no matter how distant they might seem.

And they were taught, as the Rebbe's emissaries, how to look upon a fellow Jew: With unbounded compassion, endless love, and unflagging optimism...

...even if it takes a little chutzpah.



*Scan this code in the Spotify app to hear the story of Miriam bas Bilga put beautifully to music by Rabbi Ruvy New, as featured in his album "Storm the World."*

*It's been said that there are two varieties of Chutzpah. One is an aggressive, irreverent disdain for protocol, decorum, and respect. A classic example of this would be the child, on trial for patricide, pleading for mercy on the grounds of being an orphan.*

*"Passive" chutzpah, by contrast, is more of a blithe disregard for how others might view one's actions. It says "I'm going to do what I'm going to do, with or without your approval."*

*On shlichus, the ability to put active chutzpah to positive use is an asset.*

*Passive chutzpah is a necessity.*



## Chanukah At The Mall

Of all the holidays on the Jewish calendar, few match Chanukah for sheer pizzazz.

There's something about the vivid imagery of the Maccabees' struggle, the cozy nostalgia of burning candles, and the sound of sizzling latkes that awakens something warm in the Jewish heart. The innocent, bright joy of Chanukah has a way of touching the inner child, the simple sincerity that lies at the center of a Jew's soul.

For those in the Jewish-soul business, Chanukah is a golden opportunity.

And that was why, as their first Chanukah on shlichus approached, Rabbi Zvi and Shulamit Konikov found themselves mulling over how to best utilize the holiday's unique spirit.

One attractive idea soon presented itself: Why not set up a Chanukah display at the local mall?

"It's perfect!" Rabbi Konikov enthusiastically explained to the manager, a rather dour lady named Jill. "Think about how much money you spend on Xmas ornamentation every year...now you have a



*The Dreidel House and Menorah at the Melbourne Square Mall  
Note the video screen displaying videos of the Rebbe*

chance to appeal to the Jewish demographic, and it won't cost you a penny!"

Jill blinked vacantly as the Rabbi's energetic gaze met hers.

"There's still two months left until the holiday," he continued. "Plenty of time! We'll take care of all the arrangements; it won't cost you any time or money."

Jill sighed. "I'll have to bring it up to corporate."

*Progress!*

Rabbi Konikov left the mall and made a mental note to follow up with Jill in a few days.

Days, however, turned into weeks. Every polite email, every inquiring phone call, was met with the same response: "We're waiting for corporate."

*It's a miracle that corporate ever gets anything done.*

With growing dismay, the Konikovs watched Chanukah inch closer and closer. With each passing day, they became increasingly suspicious that "corporate" was simply another name for good old disinterest.

Their fears, sadly, were confirmed several weeks before Chanukah, when Jill drily informed them that their request had been denied. Rabbi Konikov was disgusted—it was abundantly clear that the mall had been stalling them needlessly, kicking the can down the road until it was far too late to redirect their energies toward making an event elsewhere. The chutzpah, the sheer brazenness of it, rankled.

Perhaps it was time to use some chutzpah of their own.

Rabbi Konikov called one last meeting with Jill, and strode into her office with an air of regretful apology.

"Rabbi, I'm sorry that—"

"Oh, no worries!" Rabbi Konikov assured her. "In fact, I'm quite sorry too!"

"You're...you're sorry?" Jill wrinkled her nose in confusion. "For what?"

“Well,” explained the Rabbi with a deep sigh. “I’ve been flooded with letters and calls from community members these past few weeks, and they’re all unhappy—furious, even—that their faith isn’t being represented fairly.”

For the first time, Jill’s eyebrows rose.

“Until now,” the Rabbi continued dramatically, “I’ve been able to assure them that we’re in talks with the mall, and that there’s something in the works...that’s what’s been holding them back from doing anything drastic. But now...” he looked meaningfully at the manager, who now seemed distinctly rumped, “...I’m washing my hands of the issue. The Jewish community is nearing a boiling point, and I’m afraid I can no longer guarantee what they’re going to do.”

With that, Rabbi Konikov bid Jill a good day, strode down to his car, and headed back home.

By the time he completed the short drive back to his office, there was a message waiting on his answering machine. It was Jill, and she sounded downright panicked.



*The overflow crowd at the Chanukah event*

“Rabbi Konikov,” she stammered. “I’ve-*corporate* has changed its mind; you can do whatever you want.”

*That’s a bit more like it.*

\* \* \*

That Chanukah, the Melbourne Square Mall sported a massive Dreidel House displaying the story and observances of the holiday. Judah Maccabee himself (played by the Rabbi’s younger brother) gave nightly performances from noon to six throughout the eight day festival. A satellite dish was brought in—courtesy of the mall—to broadcast Chabad’s main Chanukah party in real time, plugging Brevard County into a revolutionary worldwide hookup called “Chanukah Live.”

“How many chairs would you like us to set up for the event, Rabbi?” inquired Jill, who by now had become a model of friendly cooperation. Rabbi Konikov considered the question.

“Two hundred,” he finally replied, silently hoping at least half of the chairs would be filled.

He needn’t have worried; the night of the event, *five* hundred Jews packed into the mall. Adults chatted and socialized as their children scampered through the dreidel house, gazed in awe at Judah Macabee’s imposing physique, and watched spellbound as the night’s entertainment—a Chanukah magic show—unfolded on the stage.

For the first time in Brevard history, the Rebbe’s face was streamed live on a massive screen. The crowd looked on as dozens of communities across the world were featured on the broadcast: Tokyo, Los Angeles, Paris and more—all lighting the very same flame that they were lighting, all commemorating the same miracle, all part of the same nation.

There would be more battles in the years to come, more hurdles to be leapt over, more challenges to be surmounted. But as the Konikovs looked on at the hundreds of Jews experiencing an authentic Chanukah for the first time, they noted with pride that the ice had begun to melt on the Space Coast.



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## CHANUKAH 1991

### A HOLIDAY TO REMEMBER

The winter holiday season often presents a dilemma for Jews living in Christian communities like Brevard County. Children feel deprived when their classmates and friends exchange gifts, and parents are often at a loss to explain the richness of our tradition. Advertisements on television, assignments in school, and the atmosphere in the workplace herald the Christmas holidays with enormous fanfare while Chanukah receives less than second billing. This year, however, the feeling is different among the Jews on the Space Coast. Thanks to our local Chabad organization, Chanukah 1991 will not be easily forgotten by the Brevard Jewish Community. On December 1, Jews from Titusville to Vero, Orlando to Melbourne gathered in the Melbourne Square Mall to partake in a public Menorah lighting celebration. The day's events, co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Brevard, provided a much needed shot in the arm for the entire community.

The mall program culminated at 5:00 P.M. with the kindling of a 9 foot high Chanukah Menorah by Dr. Leon Cohen, President of the Jewish Federation of Brevard. From 3:00 to 5:00, the crowd viewed a live satellite broadcast of Menorah lightings from around the world on a large screen television. There was an instantaneous kinship felt with the Jews gathered in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, packed into the Great Hall of The Kremlin in Moscow, or dancing in the streets of the Holy City of Jerusalem. All the while, children were entertained by Judah The Maccabee in a "Dreidel House" cleverly built in the shape of the renown Chanukah top. The youngsters waited in line at the entrance to the "Dreidel House" with the same enthusiasm they show for a popular Disney attraction. As the time for candle lighting

drew closer, a klezmer band struck up lively tunes and entertained the crowd. Mayor Mullin of Melbourne, Rabbi Shalom Dubov of Orlando and Rabbi Paul Grob of Temple Beth Shalom shared their thoughts on Chanukah and their appreciation for the festivities. Dr. Leon Cohen recited the blessings before kindling the Menorah and then lit the first Chanukah candles. Festivities were capped by the serving of sizzling Chanukah latkes.

The success of the day can be largely attributed to the efforts of one man - Rabbi Zvi Konikov of Chabad of the Space Coast. Like Mattathias of old, Rabbi Konikov has dedicated himself to renewing the spirit of Judaism in the community. Two thousand years ago, the Maccabees fought for the physical and spiritual survival of the Jewish nation. Today's statistics on intermarriage and the superficial knowledge of Judaism possessed by the average Jew prove that the battle is not yet won. The Chanukah program at the Mall was the latest beachhead in Rabbi Zvi's efforts to unite the Jewish community. Chanukah means rededication. Let the success of the Maccabees and the success of the Mall celebration clearly remind us how strong we can be when we all work together for the good of the Jewish community, the observance of Jewish laws, and the education of our children.

Special thanks to Maurice Kotsi for building the Dreidel House, to David Unger for providing the satellite dish and large screen television and to David Tamir, Evelyn, Maury, Michael and Marissa Rosenfield, Zvi and Miriam Chefer, Menachem Kaplan, and Sharon Hanson for working throughout the night on 'Erev' Thanksgiving to prepare for the festivities.



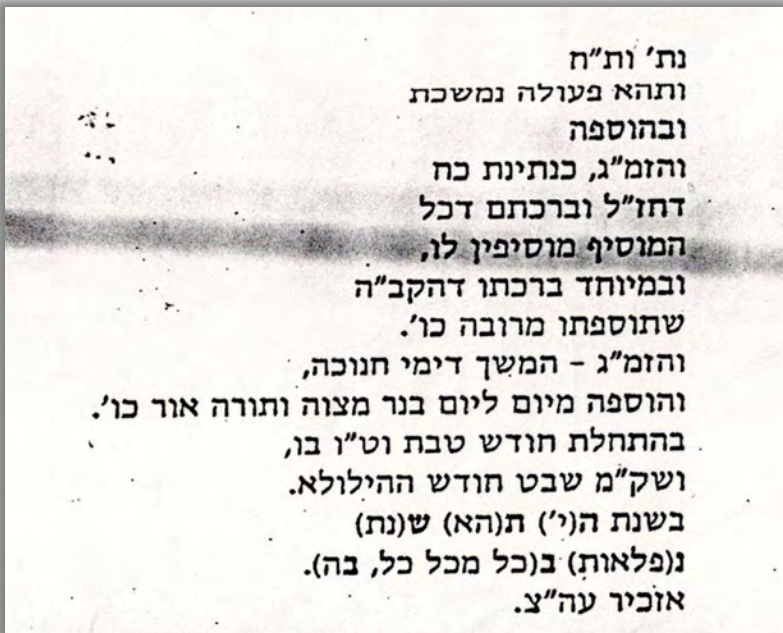
*Chabad's Chanukah event as it appeared in local newsprint*



## The Rebbes Response

After Chanukah, a local supporter traveled to New York to present the Rebbe with a report of Chabad's Chanukah outreach activities, accompanied by a photo collage. The Rebbe's response is presented below, as recorded in transcript that was faxed to Rabbi Konikov.

The wording of this response was subsequently repeated by the Rebbe in reply to other reports of Chabad events worldwide; reportedly, however, this was the very first instance that the Rebbe used it.



*Free translation:*

“[Your report is] received; much thanks

And may [these activities] be an “ongoing action”

[Accompanied by] an additional increase;

This is apropos to the current time [of year,]

as our Sages empower us [in a ruling concerning this time of year, when the nights grow longer, providing increased opportunity for post-workday Torah study]: “All who increase, are given an increase [of life from Heaven];

Especially [in light of] the blessing of the Holy one, blessed be He,

Whose “increase” [in return for one’s investment] is greater [than the “principal”]

This is [furthermore] apropos to the current time, the period subsequent to the days of Chanukah, [when we experienced] a daily addition in the candle[s of the Chanukah lights, which symbolize the “candle”] of Mitzvos and the light of Torah, etc—

[And in proximity to] the beginning of the month of Teves, the 15th of [that month], and Shabbat Mevorchim [the Shabbat preceding] the month of Shevat, the month of [the Previous Rebbe’s] passing—

In the year ה'תשנ"ב, [which serves as an acronym for the phrase] ה'י' תהי' שנת נפלאות בכל, מכל, כל בה [its shall surely be a year of wonders “*in all things*”, “*by all things*”, with “*all things*”, “*in it*”].

I shall mention [you for blessing] at the resting place [of the Previous Rebbe].

*“Who Sent You  
Guys, Anyway?”*

*Its Not Your Power*

*When the Rebbe first originated the concept of Shlichus, it seemed crazy.*

*It seemed crazy to send young, impressionable Chassidic couples to plant the delicate seeds of their nascent families in unfamiliar, aggressively secular soil.*

*It seemed crazy to expect these starry-eyed kids, uninvited and often unwelcomed by the local Jewish establishment, to make any meaningful difference at all.*

*And it seemed the very height of insanity to imagine that these very same shluchim would take a city and utterly turn it on its ear.*

*Still they went out, those early trailblazers; they set off on their crazy journeys with blind faith in the Rebbe's vision.*

*Now, decades later, it doesn't seem that crazy anymore.*

*But it still is.*

*And faith in the vision is, perhaps, more important than it ever was.*

## “The Rebbe Sent Me Back To You!”

In the early months of shlichus, there are several important skills that new shluchim are forced to develop. One of the lesser-known ones: Answering the phone with all the breezy professionalism of a CEO reclining on his \$700 patent leather office chair in his high-rise office, despite owning no such chair, no such office, and for that matter no such \$700.

It was this skill that Rabbi Mendy Paltiel marshaled that early Monday morning, when the ringtone of his newly-connected landline sounded somewhere amidst the metropolis of moving boxes ranged haphazardly across the living room floor.

“Hello, Chabad?” Rabbi Paltiel answered brightly, sounding exactly as if he was sitting on an OfficeMax® R5UC and not on a box labeled *Dovi crib—bedroom*.

“Is this the Rabbi?” asked a vaguely middle-aged voice, thick with static.

“It is.”

“I have to come speak to you,” the caller said. “It’s important.”

“Absolutely!”

An hour later, John Doron ambled lankily into Rabbi Paltiel’s office home. A conspicuously tall man with a slow, deliberate voice, John was the type of gentle giant who stood out in a crowd.

As Rabbi Paltiel listened with interest, John recounted how his secular parents, after discovering their young son investigating other religions, had begun searching for a wholesome, Jewish summer camp to send him to. By Divine Providence, they’d decided on Camp Gan Israel, Montreal.

Fourteen-year old John was enthusiastically welcomed by the campers and staff (several of whom would go on to become prominent shluchim in Southern California), and enjoyed his summer



tremendously. But his personal highlight came on the 20th of Av, the yahrtzeit of the Rebbe's father.

The oldest few bunks, including John and his friends, were taken on an overnight trip to Crown Heights. They spent the morning touring and learning, and then headed to 770 to see the Rebbe up close. At their counselors' instruction, the campers positioned themselves strategically to be able to glimpse the Rebbe as he headed from his room to the main synagogue.

Sure enough, exactly on time, the stately wooden door swung open. The Rebbe, accompanied by his secretaries, strode out into the foyer.

And that was the moment when John, not knowing any better, stuck out his hand and politely offered the Rebbe a handshake.

Grinning warmly, the Rebbe duly paused to shake the boy's hand before continuing on his way, leaving a bewildered John to be chastised by his counselors for his innocent breach of protocol.



*Left to right: John Doron, the author, Rebbetzin Kreinie Paltiel*

“I felt a little ashamed, I suppose,” John recalled with a sheepish grin, “but I was also sorta proud to have shaken the Rebbi’s hand. I figured I should do something to show the Rebbi how much I appreciated the attention he gave me.

“So before we left our hosts’ house to head back to camp, I left an envelope with some of my canteen money on the counter. I asked our host to buy a bottle of wine and send it to the Rebbi as a gesture of gratitude.”

“To my surprise,” John continued, “here was an official looking envelope waiting for me when I got back to California after the summer. It was from the Rebbi—he must’ve gotten my address somehow—warmly thanking me for ‘the thoughtful gift’ and blessing me. I was stunned—teenage kid that I was, I’d definitely never got a letter like that in my life, and from such an important Rabbi!”

Despite the warm impressions of the encounter, however, John’s life had gone in a different direction, and his connection with Chabad had waned. It was only years later, in the year 2000, that he’d stumbled across the Chabad telethon while flipping idly through the channels on his TV.



*Rabbi Paltiel putting John's height to good use at a Menorah lighting*

“I saw those Rabbis dancing with that picture,” he told Rabbi Paltiel, “and I immediately recognized the Rebbe as the great rabbi who stopped to shake my hand all those years ago.”

Moved, John decided to search up the closest Chabad house; within seconds—thanks to a still new and groundbreaking invention called “the internet”—John had discovered Rabbi Paltel’s newly-launched website, listing a phone number and an address only a few minutes away.

That initial meeting blossomed into a warm relationship. John Doron became a frequent attendee at Shabbat services, holiday events, and classes at the newly minted Chabad house. Although he had married out of the Jewish faith, he was possessed of a vibrant Jewish neshamah, and Rabbi Paltiel watched with pride as his connection to Judaism grew.

Until, one day, he just...disappeared.

For days, weeks, and then months, John’s lanky form was absent from Chabad, and all Rabbi Paltiel’s efforts to contact him proved fruitless. Somewhat taken aback, he eventually turned his attention to other matters...but John’s abrupt disappearance continued to nag at his mind.

\* \* \*

Six months later, the phone rang once again. Rabbi Paltiel—who by this point had acquired a chair, an office, and something around \$700—answered.

It was John. He’d been dealing with various medical issues, he explained in a subdued voice; his life had turned upside down. Facing a flood of doctor’s visits and checkups, along with his regular work hours, John’s attendance at Chabad had fallen by the wayside.

This continued for months...until one day, John happened to field an IT call from a client with a distinct Brooklyn accent.

A few minutes of small talk revealed that the caller was, in fact, from Brooklyn; his name was Mendel, he was currently working for Tzivos Hashem, the Chabad Youth Organization.

“Really?” John had exclaimed. “In that case, let me tell you a story about the Rebbe!”

The caller listened with interest as John told his story.

“That’s really incredible!” Mendel had replied once John finished. “I imagine with a story like that, you must be really involved in your local Chabad!”

John had been forced to admit that his participation had trickled off somewhat due to his health. Mendel commiserated with John’s difficult situation, but gently urged him to get back in touch.

“What’s your Rabbi’s name?” he’d asked, on a whim. “Perhaps I know him.”

“Rabbi Paltiel.”

“Paltiel?” Mendel had exclaimed with sudden interest. “Mendy Paltiel?”

“Yes, that’s him.”

“John... he’s my cousin!”

Hours later, Rabbi Mendy Paltiel listened in stunned silence as John concluded his story.

“Rabbi,” he said resolutely, “I’m coming back. There’s no doubt in my mind—the Rebbe sent me back to you.”



*John Doron (standing, right) following along with the Megillah reading*

For Rabbi Paltiel, John's remarkable "double return" was a potent reminder of a shliach's sacred responsibility to every Jew that he meets:

"It was right at the beginning of my shlichus," he recalls today. "I felt like I was being shown, at the very outset, how to view every Jew I would meet in the course of my shlichus. Every one of these souls is a child of the Rebbe, the Nasi (leader) of the Jewish people. The Rebbe is constantly aware of their individual needs, and finds a way to direct each of them to where they need to go. As a shliach, my duty is to be there for them, and treat them all with the love and respect that a child of the Rebbe deserves."





## A Plan For A Rainy Day

It's an irritatingly consistent fact that things always seem to go wrong on rainy days.

I pondered this inconvenient truism as I crouched beneath the meager shelter of the Yeshiva van, its rheumatic engine grunting begrudgingly beneath the patter of the Friday afternoon rain.

"What do you mean 'he didn't come?!'" I demanded of the young Yeshiva student who stood before me, arms spread in a helpless gesture.

"It's my partner Mendel!" he repeated. "He didn't show up this morning, and he's the one who knows the route!"

I sighed resignedly. "Get in the car, Bentzy... I suppose we'll figure it out on the way."

Like every Friday, my friends and I—students at Mesivta Lubavitch of Monsey, NY—were on a mission. Each pair of students had a "route," a list of Jewish homes and businesses that they would visit each week, wrapping Tefillin and distributing Shabbat candles. Dozens of men and women throughout the county—lawyers, florists, mechanics, and everyone in between—knew they could rely on the "Friday boys" for their weekly dose of Jewish inspiration.

Except, of course, when they couldn't.

"This is *fantastic*," I muttered, jolting with every bump and rattle of our beloved old van as it lurched unsteadily across the pavement. Mentally, I ran through the handful of other students who knew their way around Bentzy's route, then craned my neck to survey the car.

*Outstanding.* I chuckled mirthlessly, shaking my head in dismay. *Only me.*

Relentless necessity, as always, determined things. I dropped Bentzy off at Northern Manor, the senior living home that was my usual weekly route. Another student hopped off the van to accompany him,

and I handed them my list of names and rooms before jouncing off down the road towards Bentzy's route.

Another unfortunate truth of life: Poor decisions only ever seem to catch your attention in hindsight. This, too, I ruefully reflected on several minutes later, as an unfortunate oversight snagged my brain like a nail catching on a wool sweater. Swiveling around again, I addressed the boys in the backseat:

"Anyone got a spare raincoat?"

Silence from the van.

*Well, of course; who packs a spare raincoat?*

My usual Friday route being entirely indoors, I hadn't thought to bring my own coat with me. I had not, of course, considered the possibility that I would find myself visiting an entirely different—and decidedly *outdoor*—route that day. What were the chances?



*The author and fellow Monsey Yeshiva students with some of their friends from Northern Manor*

I turned back around in disgust as we neared the drop off for Bentzy's route, resigning myself to an afternoon of soggy shoes.

\* \* \*

It was, indeed, a soggy-shoed Yeshiva student who pulled himself wearily into the rattling van several hours later. Not that it hadn't been a successful day; in fact, a carpet-store owner on Bentzy's route, usually reluctant to put on Tefillin, had relented upon seeing me trudge soddenly but determinedly into his shop, having walked nearly half a mile in the rain.

But just as I sank gratefully into the tattered bucket seat, my blood froze in my veins.

*Oh no! I groaned inwardly. I forgot to tell Bentzy about Mr. Scop!*

Mr. Scop was a rather temperamental elderly man in the hospital wing of Northern Manor. He could be agreeable and friendly one week, sullen and taciturn the next. His moodiness was understandable, I suppose; some medical procedure or illness (I never plucked up the courage to ask which) had rendered a large portion of his face unrecognizable.



*The author and Mr. Scop in better days*

While he occasionally enjoyed us stopping in, his condition—and his reception of our visits—had recently taken a turn for the worse. The last time we had visited him, our offer of Tefillin seemed to downright upset him.

After that encounter, I'd resolved not to trouble the old man further. Had I been doing the route that week, I'd have sufficed with a quick "Shabbat Shalom!" and perhaps some good wishes.

*Poor Bentzy*, I mused anxiously. He wasn't older than fifteen, four years my junior, and I frowned at the thought of him enduring an angry tirade—or worse, unintentionally upsetting a sick old man.

To my relief, Bentzy was flushed with joy when we picked him up. He'd had a great time, he reported; he'd talked and sang with the residents of the home, lifting their spirits and his at the same time.

"What about Mr. Scop?" I ventured hesitantly. "On the second floor, right past the Pavilion...?"

"Oh, him?" Bentzy returned cheerfully. "We put tefillin on with him and spoke for a while. He was a bit quiet at first, but in the end he was so thrilled that we came!"

I grinned wearily and closed my eyes, grateful that the last surprise of that Friday had been a happy one.

\* \* \*

The next week, I returned to Mr. Scop's room. To my astonishment, I found his bed empty, the covers neatly pressed and his beloved knickknacks and pictures gone from the windowsill. With a growing sense of unease, I asked the closest nurse for an explanation.

"Mr. Scop?" the nurse replied, shaking her head mournfully. "I'm sorry, dear...he passed away this Monday."

Mechanically, I thanked her and shuffled away in a fog. *Mr. Scop... gone? Just like that?*

I shivered as the full truth came to me suddenly.

*Had I visited Mr. Scop that week, I realized with a start, had I remembered to tell Bentzy to leave him alone, he would in all likelihood have missed his chance to put on tefillin...for the last time!*

\* \* \*

*Sometimes we think that success on Shlichus comes from our own effort—our own planning, our own ingenuity, our own persistence.*

*But once in a while, perhaps on a rainy day, we're reminded of the truth.*

*We're reminded that we're only messengers, carrying out a greater plan... messengers who end up at the right place, at the right time, no matter how wrong it seems.*





## “They Were Secure in the Power of the Old One...”

*From a talk of the Rebbe in 1969*

נאר דאס איז פארשטאנדיק עפ"י וואס עס שטייט פריער לגבי שכם.  
דלכאורה בשעת שמעון ולוי זיינען געגאנגען חרוב מאכן שכם, ווי האבן  
זיי געוואוסט זיכער אז זיי וועלן דאס איינעמען, עס איז דאך א סכנה?  
שטייט אין פסוק (לד, כה) ויבואו על העיר בטה, און רש"י זאגט  
בטוחים היו על כחו של זקן, אז זיי זיינען געווען זיכער בכוחו של  
יעקב, אעפ"י זיי האבן נישט מודיע געווען יעקב'ן וואס זיי גייען טאן,  
ווי רש"י זאגט (סס, כה) שלא נסלו עצה הימנו, ואדרבה ער האט עס נישט  
געוואלט, ווי ער האט געזאגט עכרחם אותי וגו', פונדעסטוועגן וויבאלד  
אז זיי האבן עס געטאן לש"ס איז בטוחים היו על כחו של זקן.

“...with regards to [Shimon and Levi’s decimation of] the city of Shechem: Seemingly, when Shimon and Levi set out to destroy Shechem, how could they have known with certainty that they would overtake it? After all, they were putting themselves in danger!

“The verse tells us, however, that ‘they came onto the city confidently;’ Rashi explains that ‘they were secure in the strength of the Old One’—in other words, they felt secure in their father Yaakov’s [spiritual] power [to protect them], despite the fact they had not even notified him of their intentions! As Rashi elaborates, ‘they had not sought counsel from [their father],’ and in fact, Yaakov would have disproved [of their actions]!

“...nevertheless, being that they acted for the sake of heaven, they remained secure in the Old One’s power [and indeed, they were miraculously successful.”

## The Rebbe's Man In Brevard

When Rabbi Zvi and Shulamit Konikov set up shop in Brevard County, on Central Florida's Space Coast, they received a decidedly frosty welcome.

From the get-go, the Konikovs tried their best to cultivate a friendly relationship with Brevard's long-established local temples. Passionately, they laid out the Chabad mandate: Providing every Jew, regardless of affiliation or background, the opportunity to experience Judaism at their own pace in a warm and non judgmental setting.

Despite their best efforts, however, many local Jews remained deeply distrustful of Orthodoxy, and openly expressed dismay at the prospect of Chabad setting down roots in the area. On one occasion, the young shlichim were urged in no uncertain terms to "please go home."

Few people would bet on a fledgling organization getting very far in such an unfriendly environment.

The teachings of Chassidus, however, highlight a fascinating quirk of human nature: The emotional attribute of *netzach*—the relentless



*Rabbi Konikov poses with Chabad's first car menorah*



pursuit of victory at all costs, beyond all reason—becomes fully pronounced only when it finds itself being opposed.

Perhaps nobody in modern history exemplifies this concept as much as the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Faced with a world full of disdain and apathy, the Rebbe set his goals and pursued them relentlessly, unstopably, no matter what stood in his way

Following his example, the Konikovs set their jaws and moved forward. At times their prospects looked dismal; at times it seemed as if they were all alone, struggling to build on the shifting sands of the Space Coast.

Throughout the difficult first years, however, there were always signs—some large, some small—of the Rebbe’s strength guiding them through their challenges; reminders to the young shluchim that they were not alone, and that all they needed to do was create a vessel for the Rebbe’s blessings to flow through.

\* \* \*

It was in the early months of the Konikov’s shlichus that a local supporter suggested they meet with Dr. Rabbi Paul Grob, of the local Conservative congregation.

Given their reception thus far, the shluchim were doubtful that any help would be forthcoming. There didn't seem to be much to lose, however; and so, setting their misgivings aside, they duly scheduled a meeting.

The young couple arrived at the Rabbi's office with a vague sense of unease. As the austere wooden doors swung open, Rabbi Konikov found himself absently wondering how he would break the ice.

As it turned out, he needn't have worried.

The very first thing that greeted the shluchim was a magnificent, framed picture of the Rebbe, beaming at them from the wall of the Rabbi's study. All of a sudden, Rabbi Konikov found himself wanting to cry.

"What?!" he exclaimed somewhat unceremoniously. "Why...why is there a picture of the Rebbe hanging in your office?!"

If Dr. Rabbi Paul Grob was at all ruffled by this abrupt opening, he didn't show it.

"What do you mean?" he returned good-naturedly. "I visit the Rebbe every year before Rosh Hashanah!"



*Rabbi Grob addressing the crowd at Chabad's Chanukah event, flanked by Rabbi Konikov (standing, left) and the Mayor of Melbourne (seated, far right)*



If any sentence in the world could have made the conversation more surreal, that matter-of-fact statement was it. Amazed, the Konikovs took a seat as Rabbi Grob related his story.

Several years before, he and his wife Dorothy had been brought to meet the Rebbe on the famous Sunday dollar line. The instant the Rebbe handed the Grobs each a crisp dollar bill, accompanied by a blessing for success, Paul burst out in tears—much to the surprise of his wife, who was somewhat confused by her macho husband’s unexpectedly emotional outburst.

“Honey,” he solemnly told her, after taking a moment to calm down, “you know that Dr. Rabbi Paul Grob doesn’t just lose his cool. I just felt like that Rabbi...well, it was as if he was massaging my soul!”

From that day on, the Rebbe became a friend and mentor to Rabbi Grob. Like so many others, he grew to think of the Rebbe as a guide, a source of truth in a world of deceit.

The Konikovs sat in stunned silence. In a complete subversion of expectation, it seemed they had found a welcoming, warm ally—someone who was not only sympathetic to Torah-true Judaism, but to the Rebbe, his shluchim, and their vision for the Jews of Brevard County.

In the years that followed, Rabbi Grob would indeed prove to be an invaluable ally and a close friend. One memorable Chanukah, at Chabad’s massive holiday celebration in the Melbourne Square Mall, he took the podium immediately following the live broadcast of the Rebbe’s talk. To the shock of his all constituents who were present, he promptly launched into an impassioned speech—a speech that could have been lifted straight out of Rabbi Konikov’s notes:

“You all heard it!” he proclaimed to the five-hundred Jews gathered at the Menorah lighting. “The Rebbe just gave us a mandate! Each and every one of us are lamplighters; we have a mission to illuminate the world. Everyone should go out and do a mitzvah! Tell your friends!”

Later, he related to Rabbi Konikov that on one of his annual trips to



Crown Heights, the Rebbe had instructed him to “lead your congregation to Judaism.” He took up the mandate enthusiastically, encouraging his constituents to become more actively involved in Torah and mitzvot; with his encouragement, several of them even joined Chabad and began living fully observant lives.

It didn’t take long for Rabbi Grob’s pro-Chabad stance to ruffle feathers in the temple boardroom. A clever clause in his contract, however, forestalled his being removed from the faculty altogether; instead, he was reassigned from Acting Rabbi to Rabbi Emeritus. He continued his positive influence from his new position, and began keeping Shabbos, walking nearly three miles to join Chabad’s services each week.

Years later, Rabbi Konikov reflected on that first meeting.

“We thought of ourselves as Yehudah going into Goshen,” he mused, “we were coming to completely new turf, turning over Space Coast...it didn’t take long for us to realize that even here, the Rebbe had his connections—a Conservative Rabbi, of all people!—and that without question, the Rebbe was carrying us.”





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ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

In reply to your notification of the date of your wedding to take place with G-d's help,

I send you herewith my prayerful wishes that it take place in a happy and auspicious hour, and that you build an everlasting Jewish home based on the foundations of the Torah and Mitzvoth, as they are illuminated with the inner light of the Torah, that is the Teachings of Chassidus.

With blessing of  
Mazaltov Mazaltov *m. Schneerson*

*Thank you for joining in our simchah!*  
*Dovi & Devorah Leah*