| MAGAZINE FEATURE |

SEVEN BECOMES EIGHT

By Shmuel Botnick | JUNE 25, 2024

Rav Moshe Wolfson carried his Emunas Yisrael kehillah into an orbit of hope, trust, and unshakable faith



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IF ever a current of spiritual electricity could be felt, it would probably be during those epic moments on Simchas Torah when the final *pesukim* of *V'Zos Habrachah* are read aloud. With a tallis draped overhead, the crush of people lean in closely as the *baal korei*, in a ringing voice, calls out the saddest words ever written.

"Vayamas sham Moshe eved Hashem — and Moshe died there, a servant of Hashem."

It's over. The man who led, prayed, taught, cared, and cried, is gone. We all felt like we knew him so well. Ever since he was introduced to us in *parshas Shemos*, we watched his every move, analyzed his every word. And now he's gone. The *pesukim* continue, words of a final tribute to the greatest man who ever lived. And then the *baal korei*'s voice raises a notch and, in a booming declaration, cries out the final *pasuk*: *"Ul'chol hayad hachazakah, ul'chol hamoreh hagadol asher asah Moshe l'einei kol Yisrael* — and for all the great might and immense fear that Moshe displayed before all Yisrael."

In response we all proclaim, "*Chazak chazak v'nischazek*!"

It's a moment of iconic emotion — joy, sadness, and encouragement, all coming together in a crashing torrent — but a question lingers.

Rashi says that the "immense fear that Moshe displayed before all Yisrael" refers to the breaking of the Luchos.

With this we end the Torah? This is the legacy we leave Moshe Rabbeinu off with? To this timeless tragedy we cry, "*Chazak chazak v'nischazek*"?

This past week, as *parshas Beha'aloscha* faded away and rays of *parshas Shelach* began filtering in — a towering *neshamah* left this world. Who Rav Moshe Wolfson was, and how he impacted tens of thousands, can't accurately be described in these next paragraphs. He was an *ish kadosh* — a true holy person — and what he represented can only be defined in spiritual terms. Like Moshe Rabbeinu. *Eved Hashem.*

But a man whose existence was defined by the spirit can never truly die. And here is how Rav Moshe Wolfson explained the depth behind the Torah's final *pesukim*.

"The Torah is like a body. It begins at the head and ends at the feet with each letter of the Torah corresponding with a Jewish *neshamah*. The first word of the Torah, 'Bereishis,' reflects the majestic *neshamah* of Moshe Rabbeinu — the 'head' of Klal Yisrael — and each letter onward goes down one level. And then, as the Torah nears its end, Moshe dies. The light he radiated is obfuscated. We're on our own — confused, lonely, lost. The Torah ends with the words *l'einei kol Yisrael,* with Rashi explaining that this refers to the breaking of the Luchos.

"The Torah is slipping away from us, the times are that frightening. But then... we begin again! We go back to Bereishis, back to Moshe Rabbeinu. The *eved Hashem* is back with his people — *chazak chazak v'nischazek*!"

It is with this message that we bid farewell to Moshe Rabbeinu. And it is with this message that we bid farewell to Rav Moshe Wolfson.

Rav Moshe Wolfson, or "The Mashgiach," as he was universally known, fell during Shalosh Seudos last Shabbos and passed away a few hours later, on Motzaei Shabbos.

That this should be his way of departure was as if he was signing off on all that he preached for close to 70 years.

The Mashgiach — founder and head of the Emunas Yisrael beis medrash in Boro Park, with its branches in Monsey, Lakewood, and Eretz Yisrael — lived for Shalosh Seudos, the seudah of "*raava d'raavin*," a time of "desire of desires" or "will of wills." Shalosh Seudos was when he would share his primary Torah thoughts, and hundreds would pack the room as he spoke, in his sweet, thin voice clearly discernible in the densely silent audience.

The minhag among chassidim is to conduct Shalosh Seudos in a dark room — a "*tinkel tish*" — and the Mashgiach would explain that this is because Shalosh Seudos allows one to draw on energy of *emunah* that will sustain him even in the darkness.

Parshas Beha'aloscha begins with Moshe's instruction to his brother Aharon, *"B'ha'aloscha es haneiros* — in your raising of the *neiros.*" In his sefer *Emunas Itecha*, the Mashgiach expounds upon the idea that the light that shone forth from the Menorah was the light of the Ohr Haganuz — that original primordial light created on the first day of Creation and subsequently hidden away.

"And certainly," the Mashgiach would say, "when we read this parshah, there is a great illumination from the Ohr Haganuz."

At last week's *tinkel tish*, a ray of the Ohr Haganuz threatened to slip away, the light that the Mashgiach had radiated for so long beginning to ebb.

Don't worry, says the Mashgiach — it's Shalosh Seudos, the time of *raava d'raavin*. Now is the time to strengthen yourselves in *emunah*, even in the darkness.

He passed away a few hours later, on *parshas Shelach*. The parshah in which we learn about the beauty, the sanctity, the primacy, of Eretz Yisrael.

And how the Mashgiach loved Eretz Yisrael! He would speak of it always, sharing how every piece of dust from Eretz Yisrael is imbued with kedushah. "Some would wait before polishing their shoes upon returning home from Eretz Yisrael," he would relate. "They didn't want to remove the dust of Eretz Yisrael from their shoes."

"A regular weekday Shemoneh Esreh in Eretz Yisrael," the Mashgiach would tell his *talmidim*, "is like Ne'ilah in *chutz l'Aretz*." He would repeat the words of the *heilige* Ruzhiner that one knows if he is an *erliche Yid* if he sustains a love for Eretz Yisrael.

The Mashgiach would extoll the value of simply eating the food of Eretz Yisrael. Before the Meraglim set out on their infamous journey, Moshe Rabbeinu tells them, *"v'hischazaktem u'lakachtem mipri ha'aretz* — strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the land." The Mashgiach explained that Moshe knew that there lay great spiritual risk in this journey and he wished to give them a word of guidance. "Strengthen yourselves! Eat from the fruits of Eretz Yisrael! You'll be invigorated with the blessing and divinity that lies within all that nourishes from the Land that is our heritage!"

An inspiring book titled *Sacred Soil*, written by Baila Vorhand and published by ArtScroll in 2017, is a compilation of many of the thoughts and insights about Eretz Yisrael that the Mashgiach shared over the years.

On Sunday, *parshas Shelach*, following a *levayah* in New York, the *aron* was flown to Eretz Yisrael for burial in Teveria, in the ancient cemetery consecrated by the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov and where the Mashgiach's first rebbe, Rebbe Yochanan of Karlin-Stolin, is buried.

But if Teveria was the end of the Mashgiach's journey, the beginning was at the other end of the world. Born on 24 Shevat, 1925, Moshe Wolfson was raised in Williamsburg long before it became the bastion of Torah and *chassidus* that it is today. His parents were Aleksander chassidim and his father was scrupulous about not talking during davening. The era would serve as the testing waters for American thrills and freedoms, but Moshe's father had a very strict rule: No movies. Moshe was sent to Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and was drawn in by the humble yet dynamic personality of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz. Rav Shraga Feivel's inspiration took Moshe's natural inclination toward *chassidus* and set it on a path where it could be developed into ocean-deep *yiras Shamayim*, unbridled humility, and, what would ultimately become his legacy, towering, unshakable *emunah*.

The humble beginnings yielded no startling pivot to stardom. The Mashgiach remained in Torah Vodaath throughout his yeshivah years. After his marriage to Malkah Devorah Spitzer, he assumed a job as the Pre-1A teacher in Torah Vodaath. He later taught second grade, and then fifth grade. But then he contracted laryngitis and lost his voice entirely. He couldn't speak and couldn't teach.

With no option to continue his career as a rebbi, Rav Wolfson began working at a watch business in Manhattan. This arrangement lasted for one year.

"I *shteiged* more from that year than anything else," the Mashgiach would say. "Because when traveling on the subway, I had to train myself not to look at anything I shouldn't. And the shop where I worked had a non-Jewish neighbor who would listen to blaring music. So I had to train myself how not to listen to that which I shouldn't."

And then one day, Rav Itzikel of Pshevorsk from Antwerp was visiting New York and Rav Wolfson approached him for a brachah that his voice return. Rav Itzikel was in the midst of taking off his Rabbeinu Tam tefillin when Rav Wolfson made his request. In the mystical ways of tzaddikim, Rav Itzikel responded, "You don't see that I'm taking off my tefillin and haven't eaten all day?! *Zult zein gezunt un shtark!"*

"And," the Mashgiach would smile upon concluding this story, "I became *gezunt un shtark*."

But in fact, his voice never regained its full vigor and he could not return to a formal teaching position. It was Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, rosh yeshivah of Torah Vodaath at the time, who realized that in his young protégé, there lay a potential that could reach far beyond the classroom. And so it was that Rav Moshe Wolfson was granted a new title. Mashgiach.

But even the honorary title wouldn't ignite a fleck of ego. Speaking at the *levayah*, his son-in-law Rav Chaim Rosenberg shared how, when he had gotten engaged, his father asked his new *mechutan* what he did for a living. *"Ich nem attendance in Torah Vodaas*," was the simple response, "I take attendance in Torah Vodaas."

But if he saw his role as insignificant, his *talmidim* might beg to differ. Another one of the Mashgiach's sons-in-law is the Toldos Yehudah Stuchiner Rebbe, Rav Mottel Zilber. (Rebbe Mottel's son, Rav Shmuel Yehuda Zilber, *dayan* of Stuchin and Emunas Yisrael, will be the Mashgiach's successor.)

"I came to Torah Vodaath from Satmar Cheder," Rebbe Mottel recounted. "I missed the chassidishe *mehalech* but the Mashgiach was like a flash of light. He didn't give his *shmuess* in the beis medrash. He gave it in a classroom upstairs. But all the bochurim would run to hear it."

Rav Wolfson had developed close relationships with leading chassidishe rebbes, primarily the Modzitzer Rebbe, the Satmar Rebbe, the Skverer Rebbe, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe. From the vantage point of his newfound position, he was able to inculcate the profound life lessons and perspectives he had gained from these chassidic masters into the hearts and minds of his young charges.

In 1969, the Mashgiach embarked on an endeavor that proved highly providential. Together with veteran *mechanech* Rav Shmuel Dishon, he instituted a *masmidim* program in Camp Torah Vodaath.

The rustic atmosphere of camp afforded opportunities for the Mashgiach to cultivate an even greater influence on his *talmidim* than he could throughout the year. It was here that he began conducting his Shalosh Seudos *tishen*, sharing novel ideas based on a tapestry of chassidic sources. Another area upon which the Mashgiach placed singular emphasis during the camp season was tefillah.

The Mashgiach, who davened in Stolin as a child in Williamsburg, was deeply taken by the Stoliner approach to tefillah, which demanded fiery engagement, expressed with boundless emotion. The Mashgiach introduced this style of davening (Karliner chassidim are known to shout when they daven) to the *masmidim* program, demonstrating how tefillah can become a transcendental and transformative, experience.

These *talmidim* were young bochurim, but somehow, they knew that they had just accessed something that couldn't simply be abandoned.

They decided that they would open a shul and, on *parshas Noach* of 1976, in a storefront located on Boro Park's 45th Street and 12th Avenue, the very first official minyan gathered together under the leadership of the Mashgiach, Rav Moshe Wolfson.

The venture was successful and they eventually relocated to 16th and 53rd, where they davened in the floor above the beis medrash of Rav Menashe Klein. This lasted for around two years, when they moved to a building on 14th and 44th. Today, the magnificent edifice located at 4310 16th Avenue, emblazoned with the words "Emunas Yisrael," is a testament to the uncontainable spirituality that lay within the Mashgiach's humble message.

Word of the Mashgiach's brilliant Torah, vibrant davening, and deeply refined *middos* spread far and wide. At any event led by the Mashgiach, members of just about every kehillah in Klal Yisrael could be found. Clean-shaven men sporting colored shirts could be seen alongside chassidim of Satmar, Gur, Breslov, and Chabad. The Mashgiach's inspiration knew no party lines; all felt the embrace in the ideals that he preached.

And, although expressed in myriad ways, these ideals ultimately came down to one, all-encompassing truth.

Emunah.

The Mashgiach lived, breathed, and demanded, absolute *emunah*.

"We're in the Ribono shel Olam's hands," was his constant refrain. "What are you worried about?"

He would quote the Be'er Mayim Chaim, who shares an interpretation from the Baal Shem Tov on the words from Tehillim 92, *"Ki hinei oyevecha Hashem, ki hinei oyevecha yoveidu*— for behold, Your enemies Hashem, for behold, Your enemies You will eliminate." The Baal Shem Tov explained a hidden message in this verse. If you recognize that your enemies all come from Hashem, that every difficulty you endure is Heaven-sent, then, *"oyevecha yoveidu"*— these

enemies will dissipate. The very acknowledgment of Hashem's Hand in your challenges affects salvation from the very same Hand.

The Mashgiach shares this thought in *Emunas Itecha*, followed by the words, *"v'halevai shenizkeh l'kach* — if only we could merit such a level."

But indeed, it seems that the Mashgiach did.

The wife of one of his *mispallelim* was in labor and the doctors cautioned that surgical intervention seemed necessary as the baby was breech. The man rushed to the Mashgiach and frantically told him, "The baby's the wrong way!" With his classic softness, the Mashgiach smiled.

"You mean the baby is breech?" For the Mashgiach, there was no such thing as the "wrong way" — everything Hashem does is right.

"Could the Mashgiach give us a brachah?" the man pressed. The Mashgiach smiled again and gave a heartfelt blessing and the man rushed back to the hospital. The doctors' concerns were mounting at this point and the mood was tense. But a second ultrasound, much to the surprise of the staff, indicated that the baby had flipped.

The Mashgiach's *emunah* wasn't merely a blind belief that precluded independent thought and analysis. On the contrary, he believed that every aspect of life should be carefully reviewed to determine what precisely Hashem wants from us and how we are to grow from it.

Rav Chesky Hasenfeld, today the rav of the Emunas Yisrael kehillahin Lakewood, once shared with the Mashgiach that, in an effort to improve his English, the legendary *maggid shiur*, Reb Mendel Kaplan, would bring a *New York Times* to yeshivah. His students would read to him and he'd explain the Hashgachah that lay within the world events.

"I wish I could give a *shiur* in the news," the Mashgiach responded, "so you can see how everything is Hashem."

Indeed, the Mashgiach would point to various politicians' names and show how they equal the same *gematria* as *"Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed"* or the like. During the Arab Spring, he spoke about the 13 "princes" of Yishmael and how they must meet their downfall.

Rabbi Yitzchak Gottdiener, executive director of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, shared a decades-long relationship with the Mashgiach. Time and again he was privy to the Mashgiach's refined insight, identifying the Yad Hashem while all that seemed visible was frustration. But one incident in particular comes to mind.

"I had spent months working on an initiative that would result in some one million dollars of funds for the yeshivah," he says. "But after so much time and effort, the plan seemed to go sour. I was so miserable that my wife wouldn't let me go to work until I spoke to the Mashgiach."

Rabbi Gottdiener shared his woes with the Mashgiach, who listened sympathetically.

"Reb Yitzchak," he said softly, "have things been going well in the yeshivah lately?"

Rabbi Gottdiener nodded.

"The *talmidim* are happy? The *hanhalah* is happy?" Rabbi Gottdiener nodded again.

"So who's not happy?" the Mashgiach asked. Rabbi Gottdiener was silent.

"The Satan is not happy," the Mashgiach supplied. "He doesn't like that the learning is going well in yeshivah. So he's trying to make your life miserable. This way, you won't do a good job fundraising, you'll miss the next paycheck, the rebbeim will be upset, and the learning will suffer. You go and do your job, and let Hashem take care of this."

A few months later, the initiative thought to have gone sour bore fruit, in the form of a million-dollar check made out to Yeshiva Torah Vodaath.

When Rav Chesky Hasenfeld was a bochur, he asked the Mashgiach if he should stay up all night on Shvi'i shel Pesach as a *hishtadlus* for shidduchim.

"Yechezkel, don't try any acrobatics," the Mashgiach responded. "Come to shul on time tomorrow, say the Shirah properly, daven to Hashem. That should be your approach."

Once, just prior to Rosh Chodesh Elul, Reb Chesky went together with the Mashgiach to visit a certain rebbe. Drinks were shared and then, the rebbe engaged the Mashgiach in conversation.

"So how should we prepare ourselves for the *avodah* of Elul?" the Rebbe asked.

The Mashgiach smiled. "We just said *'shehakol nihyeh bidvaro'* declaring that everything comes from Hashem. What greater preparation for Elul can there be?"

For 40 years (until 2012, when traveling became too difficult), the Mashgiach would spend ten weeks every summer in Eretz Yisrael, making sure he was always there for *parshas Shelach*. His final journey on that very week is eerily providential; in fact, he would always say, "I really live in Eretz Yisrael, but I just have a job in America I have to go back to for now."

Yossi Kohl, a 41-year-old *avreich* who was born into Emunas Yisrael and today lives in the Jerusalem suburb of Beitar, one of five places where there is an Emunas Yisrael kehillah (together with Boro Park, Monsey, Lakewood, and Jerusalem), was a bochur in the Mir when he would daven Shacharis and Minchah with the Mashgiach every day at the Kosel.

"Every day here was precious to him," says Reb Yossi. "He made a *cheshbon* that ten weeks times 40 years was like living here for eight years straight. And neither he nor his Rebbetzin would ever say a disparaging word about Eretz Yisrael. Not even an innocuous statement like, 'Oy, it was really hot today.'"

With time, the Mashgiach's official Eretz Yisrael minyan moved from the Kosel to the Boyaner cheder building on Rechov Yeshayahu and made a few additional stops until today, when the official Shabbos minyan is on Rechov Even Ha'ezel in Ezras Torah.

For the Mashgiach, it didn't really matter — every street was precious, every name significant.

"I was once walking the Mashgiach back from davening on Leil Shabbos to his apartment on Rechov Gesher Hachaim," Reb Yossi remembers. "We were walking down Rechov Rashi, when the Mashgiach said, 'Oh, I just thought of a certain *pshat* in Rashi," and began to share with us. We asked him why Rechov Rashi, which was given this name by a secular government, would have anything to do with Rashi. He said, 'In Eretz Yisrael, everything is Hashgachah pratis, so if the street is called Rechov Rashi, even if the people who named it had a different intent, it means that at some spiritual level, it somehow has to do with Rashi.'"

IN Emunas Itecha, *parshas Chayei Sarah*, the Mashgiach points out that, throughout Eliezer's entire mission to find a shidduch for Yitzchak, the name "Eliezer" isn't mentioned. The Torah refers to him as either "*ish*" or "*eved,*" but never by his name.

The Mashgiach suggests that this alludes to the midrash of how Hashem "works all day to pair together *zivugim.*" Eliezer's name isn't mentioned, says the Mashgiach, because it wasn't Eliezer. It was Hashem. Everything is Hashem. *Shehakol nihyeh bidvaro.*

And if *emunah* can foster a blessed marriage, that would explain a 70-year long phenomenon in which the Mashgiach and the Rebbetzin lived with sublime unity.

A chassan soon to be married was once speaking with the Mashgiach, seeking his blessing and advice for a blissful marriage.

"I know a person who never got into a fight with his wife," the Mashgiach said. "And that person is sitting right across from you."

Rabbi Kolev Gestetner, owner of Lakewood's Kosher Village, was a bochur heading back home from Eretz Yisrael. His taxi let him off at the airport and as he made his way to the terminal, he noted that the Mashgiach and his rebbetzin were walking just behind them. He observed as the Mashgiach turned to his wife.

"Di Rebbetzin hut di passports?" he asked. Does the Rebbetzin have the passports?

"*Nein,*" said the Rebbetzin, "*ich hub gemeint az der Mashgiach hut di passports* (I thought that the Mashgiach has the passports)."

"Nein, ich hub zei nisht," said the Mashgiach, "I don't have them."

At this point they stopped and looked at each other. Then they both smiled and said, "Baruch Hashem. *Noch a tog in Eretz Yisroel* — another day in Eretz Yisrael."

The Mashgiach would not share *divrei Torah* at the Shabbos table until the Rebbetzin — who passed away in 2021, also well into her 90s — was present and, once he shared them, the conversation wouldn't move on until she was fully satisfied with the insight.

Before heading off to Shalosh Seudos, or any other event that he'd conduct, the Mashgiach would turn to his rebbetzin for a brachah. She would bless him profusely, concluding with the all-encompassing supplication that Hashem be "*mimaleh kol mishalos libcha l'tovah.*"

The Rebbetzin would serve a special role in the Mashgiach's Chanukah candle lighting. She would hold a spoon filled with oil in which there was a burning wick. The Mashgiach would ignite the *shamash* from this wick.

The Mashgiach explained that just as we are taught that the husband should help his wife by preparing the Shabbos candles, so too, the wife should help her husband in his mitzvah of *hadlakas ner Chanukah.*

People in the kehillah were well aware of how the Mashgiach was impacted by the spiritual uplift of Shabbos and Yom Tov. All knew that, beginning Wednesday morning, it would be difficult to get the Mashgiach's attention because "Shabbos is coming!"

And no Shabbos was ever the same — each one was auspicious, filled with its own unique spiritual properties. The Shabbos before Purim has a unique spiritual potential, unlike any other, as does a Shabbos that falls out on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, or really, any day of any month. Every day is special and unique, with powers that never existed until now and will never exist again.

And then there was Yom Tov. The Mashgiach's life revolved around the Yamim Tovim. One Rosh Chodesh Adar, someone brought the Mashgiach a sefer about Purim. "I can read it next year," the Mashgiach told him. "For this year, it's too late." In recent years, the elderly Mashgiach would spend winters in Florida, graciously hosted by the Shaulson family who would service his every need. The Mashgiach would bring his seforim on Purim, and begin to learn them sometime around the middle of Teves.

The most crushing blow of the Mashgiach's *petirah* is that it happened prior to Mashiach's arrival.

The Mashgiach constantly spoke of Mashiach. He saw Mashiach in each development of current events, in every *pasuk* in the Chumash, every *nevuah* of Tanach. Shabbos was Mashiach, Yom Tov was Mashiach. He would speak about different Tannaim, such as Rabi Shimon bar Yochai and Raban Gamliel, who shared unique connections with Mashiach.

The Gemara tells us that, upon arriving in Shamayim, we are asked, "*Tzipisa l'yeshuah*? [Did you yearn for the salvation?]" The Mashgiach was certainly able to answer with a thundering, "Yes!" But was that response laced with thorough disappointment?

Perhaps. But something about the Mashgiach's mystical passing sends a whisper of hope to all those who mourn his loss.

In *Emunas Itecha*, *parshas Behar*, the Mashgiach discusses the custom among chassidim to begin Shalosh Seudos near the close of Shabbos and continue deep into the night. Why do they do this? he ponders. He explains based on an idea from the Maharal that the number seven represents the climax of natural order. All cycles exist in the form of seven. In a world governed by temporal science, an eighth day cannot exist.

The power of "eight," says the Maharal, flows from a place above This World. Eight represents that which transcends, that which is inaccessible.

It represents the world of Mashiach.

Says the Mashgiach, we conduct Shalosh Seudos deep into the night because those are the moments of "eight." Shabbos, the seventh day of the week, has slipped away, revealing that exalted pocket of supernatural time called "Eight."

And then he says as follows: "And if the general Geulah still has not come, at least each heartened Jew, in this auspicious time, can connect with the holiness of the time and merit personal redemptions... and be freed and redeemed from the oppressors who oppress, the yetzer hara..."

The Mashgiach left us on Motzaei Shabbos during those hours when the seventh fades and the eighth comes in to being. For decades, he captured those very moments and, before hundreds of listeners in a silent, dark room, taught about Shabbos, Yom Tov, Mashiach, and *emunah*.

But without even realizing it, the Mashgiach was giving us so much more. He was giving us a personalized Geulah. Because Geulah binds ends with beginnings — *Hein ga'alti eschem acharis k'reishis*.

And the Mashgiach taught us that when the end comes, and the Luchos shatter, don't mourn. Start the Torah anew, connect the *acharis* with the *reishis*, the end with the beginning, the seventh with the eighth, the lowly with the lofty.

And together, cry out: *Chazak chazak v'nischazek!*

Close Encounters

While the Mashgiach had special relationships with several rebbes and was especially close with both the Satmar and Skverer Rebbes, he enjoyed a unique, almost supernatural relationship with the Lubavitcher Rebbe *zy"a*. Rav Leibel Schapiro, rosh yeshivah of Yeshiva Gedolah of Miami and rav of Beis Menachem, once asked the Mashgiach how it was that he became such an ardent chassid of the Rebbe. The Mashgiach responded with an incredible story.

"There was a time when my grandchild got ill," the Mashgiach related. "I was in Yerushalayim at some point during this difficult period and my grandchild's plight bothered me immensely. Each night, I would go to the Churva shul in the Old City, where no one was present, and recite Krias Shema al Hamitah with fervent *kavanah*."

There were certain tefillos for which the Mashgiach adopted Nusach Ari (the *nusach* used in Chabad and some other chassidic groups), Krias Shema al Hamitah included. As part of that version of the text, Tehillim Chapter 51 is recited. The Mashgiach relayed how one *pasuk* in that *kapitel* would spark an outburst of emotion: *"Zivchei Elokim ruach nishbarah, lev nishbar v'nidkeh Elokim lo sivzeh* — the sacrifices to Hashem are a broken spirit; a broken and dejected heart, Hashem does not disparage."

"I would say that *pasuk* again and again, weeping profusely," the Mashgiach recounted.

The Mashgiach returned to New York and, one Sunday, went to the Rebbe for "dollars," as was his frequent practice. The Rebbe handed him a dollar. The Mashgiach then leaned in closer. "Rebbe, please, a brachah for a *refuah sheleimah* for my grandson?" he asked.

The Rebbe gave him a piercing look.

"When someone says the *pasuk 'lev nishbar v'nidkeh Elokim lo sivzeh'* with *kavanah*, the Eibeshter helps," the Rebbe responded.

"That," the Mashgiach told Rav Schapiro, "is what made me a chassid of the Rebbe."

In fact, many stories are known in the Mashgiach's inner circle about certain other-worldly incidents with the Rebbe. Many years ago, the Mashgiach had to have some sort of cardiac procedure, and he was already checked into the hospital and in a hospital gown. But then he thought to himself, "Wait, I never went to the Rebbe for a brachah about this!" So he got dressed and went to "dollars," asked the Rebbe about the impending procedure, and the Rebbe said, "*Nisht yetzt. M'ken varten* — not now, it can wait."

So the Mashgiach went back to the hospital and checked out. About 20 years later, the same condition reappeared, but the Rebbe was no longer alive. Still, the Mashgiach felt he needed the Rebbe's direction, so he went to the Rebbe's Ohel and davened that somehow, Hashem should send some sign from the Rebbe about what he should do. As he walked into the beis medrash that abuts the cemetery, where there is a 24/6 running video of *farbrengens* and "dollars" from years past, the Mashgiach looked up and saw himself, with the Rebbe saying "*Nisht yetzt. M'ken varten*."

One summer, before the Mashgiach set off for his annual trip to Eretz Yisrael, he decided that, in contrast to years past when he would be asked to speak at many venues, that year he decided to decline all speaking offers and concentrate instead on his own learning without all those distractions. But when he went for "dollars" before he left, his plans for privacy were upended: The Rebbe handed him two dollars — one for the trip, and the second for *hatzlachah* in all the speeches he'd be giving.

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