

A BEIS MOSHIACH SUPPLEMENT IN HONOR OF PESACH 5785

WITH ALL THEIR ART & SOUL



HOW THE REBBE MELECH HAMOSHIACH
INSPIRED TALENTED INDIVIDUALS TO
TRANSFORM THEIR G-D GIVEN GIFTS OF
ARTISTIC EXPRESSION INTO VESSELS FOR
THE SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION PREPARING
THE WORLD FOR MOSHIACH

יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד



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744 Eastern Parkway
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— Editor

Levi Liberow

— Managing Editor

Shraga Crombie

— Director

Rabbi M.M. Hendel

— Rabbinical Advisor

Rabbi Y. Chazan

— Grid Design

Mendimarantz.com

— Designer

Avremy Kolton

**BMOSHIACH.ORG
718.778.8000**

— Subscribe

info@bmoshiach.org

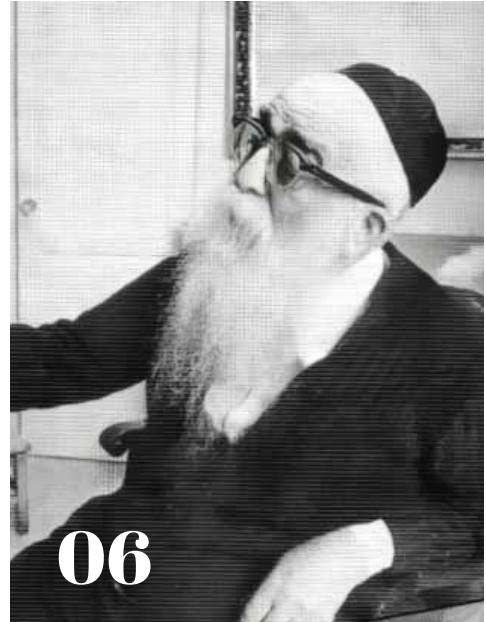
— General

editor@beismoshiach.org

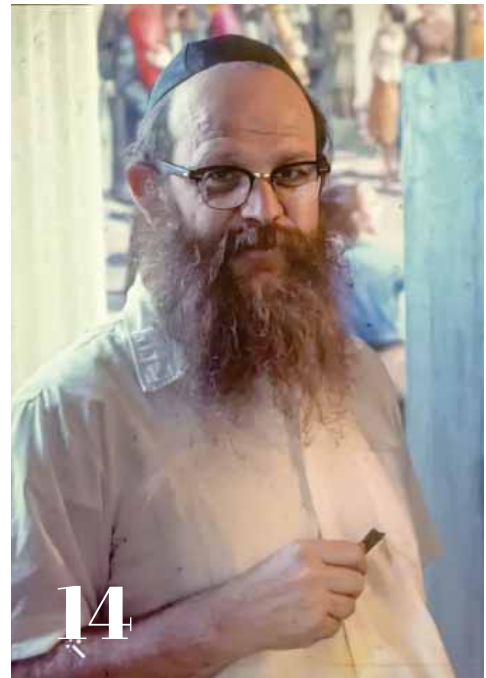
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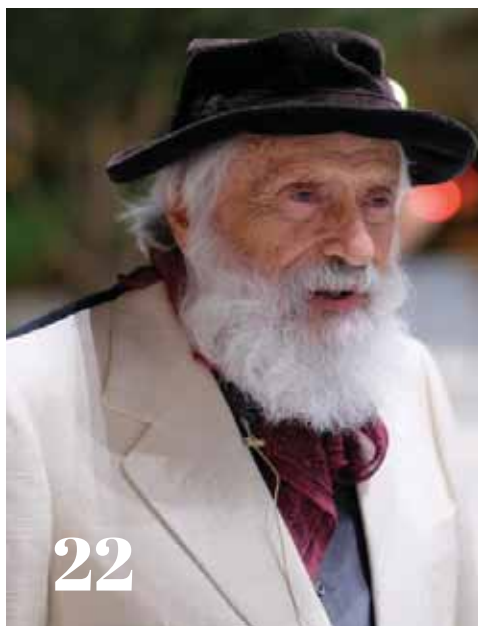
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Chenoch Hendel Lieberman (Futerfas)
Tomchei Tmimim's First Artist



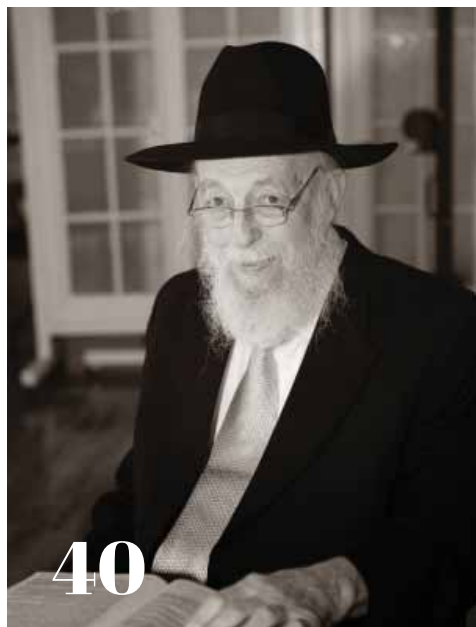
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Art: Free License or Immense Obligation?

The Rebbe and the world of art are definitely a tremendous chiddush of the seventh generation of Chabad. Throughout the years, everyone knew that Chabad *munt pnimiyus*. Concepts such as “personal desire” and “personal expression” were fully rejected in the face of Chassidic concepts such as *iskafia* and *is’hapcha*. The personal desire of a Jew, all the more so of a Chassid, is to fulfill G-d’s will and give Him *nachas ruach*; nothing more.

“What does the L-rd your G-d ask of you,” was always the central focus. A Jew must be fully immersed in avodas Hashem and not in his personal ambitions. In contrast to that, art, by its nature, is a product of personal expression. The artist, through his art, expresses himself, his thoughts and feelings, from the deepest recesses of the psyche onto the canvas or whatever different materials with which he builds, creates or sculpts. Therefore, there was no place for personal art in the Chassidic world.

The Rebbe, Nasi of the “seventh generation,” created quite a revolution as far as the Chassidic perception of the world of art. If, until then, the ‘yetzer’ of art was not given any credence among Chassidim, since he was a “yesh” and a “davar bifnei atzmo,” the Rebbe understood

that art needed to be sanctified and harnessed in order to bring the Shechina down.

The Rebbe expressed this explicitly to artist R’ Hendel Lieberman in a yechidus:

“Previously, the whole matter of ‘drawings’ was out of the question by Chassidim. We don’t even have photos of the ziknei ha’Chassidim. However, now, Yemos HaMoshiach, when a Jew can draw another Jew close through art, he must do so. Why search for foreign artists if we have our own who was in the four cubits of yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim...”

These words represent a complete change of thinking. As part of the goal set out in the first maamar, “to draw down a dwelling down below,” the Rebbe did not hesitate to harness any domain which could help make this happen. The world of art was also harnessed by the Rebbe to bring the revelation of Moshiach to the world.

This is the Rebbe’s response to whether to offer art studies in Beth Rivkah in France:

“Regarding what you write about studying art, this is obviously good, especially that by doing so one can say that they will be drawn to Limudei Kodesh.” (Igros Kodesh vol. 13, p. 223).



This supplement, published for Pesach 5785, is about the Rebbe's interactions with artists, mostly ones who worked with paint. The Rebbe, as mentioned, wasn't fazed by the world of art; on the contrary, he did not suffice with encouraging artists in their work – he even guided, counseled and directed them in how to produce a G-dly idea within art and express it in the best possible way. All of the artists, each in his own way, tells of the Rebbe's depth of understanding of the world of art as well as his sensitivity toward them.

Furthermore, these artists by nature belong more to the world of the spirit than the material world. This is why many of them didn't know how to make money from their artwork. The Rebbe greatly encouraged them to continue in their work and sometimes awarded them money and scholarships (and also paid for galleries), thereby giving them the most effective push to continue to give actual form to their inner world of the spirit.

The holiday of freedom, in its deepest sense, is expressed by, among other things, bringing out the talents with which a person is gifted by Hashem into a state of freedom and liberation while using them for holy purposes. After all, this is precisely the reason why man was given talents.

In this supplement, we profile artists who were guided by the Rebbe in their work. Although there are many others who connected to the Rebbe's great light, and that connection found expression in their work, they were not privileged to receive personal guidance from the Rebbe.

We hope you enjoy this supplement and remember to harness your personal talents, each in his field, to bring the Shechina down below, to spread the Besuras HaGeula and give the Rebbe *nachas ruach*.

Chag Kosher V'Somayach, ■

Tomchei Tmimim's First Artist:

**Chenoch Hendel
Lieberman
(Futerfas)**

As you surely know, the artist's primary talent lies in their ability to distance themselves from the external shell of things and ... to look deeply within, see their essence, and be able to convey this in their painting. In this way, the subject of the painting is revealed as it has never been revealed before

**From a Yiddish letter to R'
Hendel in Adar 5711**





"Histalkus" by
Chenocho Lieberman.
Oil on Canvas, 1950's

Rabbi Chenocho Hendel Lieberman was born on the 14th of Nissan, 1901, in the city of Polotsk, in what was then known as Belarus, Russia.

At the age of two, the Lieberman family was forced to move from city to city due to persecutions and pogroms. At the age of seven, he became orphaned, losing his father, from whom he inherited many artistic skills. His father was a painter and violinist, and these talents were passed on to his son, Chenocho Hendel.

From a young age, he exhibited a compulsive need to paint. Every surface seemed to him a canvas. Later, he testified, "I painted everything. I felt an inner need to paint." The walls of his house were filled with murals, and even his siddur and the young boy's sefarim were not spared from his pencil...

An art teacher who saw his paintings predicted a successful future for him, saying that he would become a pride of the Jewish people in the field of painting.

Hendel's mother, knowing the obsessive nature of artists, feared that he might be swept away by a rebellious lifestyle. At the age of twelve, she sent him to study in Lubavitch, where he learned under the guidance of the renowned mashpia, Rabbi Shmuel Gronem Esterman, and at his mother's request, he also stayed in Reb Gronem's home.

However, at this age, his artistic yearnings began to take flight. The external world called to him, and he longed to paint everything his eyes saw. As a Chabad Chassid, he suppressed his desires and talents, dedicating himself to Torah study and avodas Hashem until the age of eighteen.

The conflict between his studies and his artistic talents became intense. His skills consumed him entirely, and Hendel could not suppress them. The dilemma was impossible to resolve: to remain a Chassidic Jew with all that it entailed, or to deny his heritage and join the external world. The idea that his Chassidic inclinations could curb or temper his artistic impulses seemed impossible to him. Several times, he tried to escape from Lubavitch, only to be returned there by his mother.

These were turbulent times in Russia - both the revolution against the Czar and World War I. Hendel, along with his family, was forced to take to the road and head toward Moscow.

In the year 1920, he found himself studying art in Moscow while simultaneously working in the textile business with his family. Even during his university studies, he remained closely connected to Lubavitch. He participated regularly in "Tiferes Bachurim" (a Torah learning program for students) in Moscow.

In 1925, he married Breina Friedman, and the couple had two daughters, Bluma and Leah.

R' Hendel himself underwent several emotional upheavals. The Rebbe Rayatz, who was then in Leningrad, took a personal interest in his spiritual condition. When a Chassid arrived from Moscow to Leningrad, the Rebbe inquired about Hendel's activities and situation.

When the Rebbe visited Moscow, R' Hendel came to see him dressed in his university uniform. The Rebbe asked him, "How long will you straddle two worlds? It's time for you to return to your source."

R' Hendel worked hard to support his family, working with his uncle in the oil business, but his heart was not in it. He 'hungered' for painting. Only when he sat before a canvas did he find emotional release and feel spiritual satisfaction. He would say apologetically, 'What can I do? What am I to blame if Hashem gave me the talent to paint?'

In 1927, a pivotal moment in his life came. He was bedridden for several months due to a stomach ulcer, and during this time, the famous sculptor Innocent Zhukov visited him. Zhukov, impressed with Hendel's paintings, wanted to take one to exhibit in a national painting competition. He chose a small painting depicting a group of ice skaters.

R' Hendel's painting won first prize in the competition (out of 500 works of art displayed), which earned him a scholarship for six years of study at the prestigious Moscow Academy of Fine Arts. This recognition confirmed his status as a serious, professional artist.

From then on, he threw himself into his studies with renewed enthusiasm, completing the required courses in half the time.

In the 1930s, R' Hendel worked as a state artist. His duties included painting portraits of outstanding workers and designing posters celebrating the achievements of the Communist regime. He gained considerable recognition, and his works were displayed in museums, including the prestigious Tretyakov Gallery.

Alongside his work as a state artist, R' Hendel spent his private time painting independently. Through these paintings, he expressed his longing for his hometown of Pleshnitz and for Lubavitch. On one occasion, he said to a friend, "You think I am here? No! I am in Lubavitch."

A Life Shattered

During the difficult years of the Holocaust, R' Hendel was drafted into the Red Army. His wife and two daughters were murdered by the vile murderers, may their names be erased. Only after the war did he learn the full extent of the tragedy. His dreams of a happy, thriving family life were shattered by wild beasts.

This horrific event left deep scars on R' Hendel's soul, and he was deeply shaken. For a long period, he could not regain his composure.



R' Hendel at work on a painting

After the war, he lived with his fellow Chassidim. During this period, he gave up his family name “Futerfas” and adopted the name “Lieberman,” which sounded more Polish. This allowed him to leave the Soviet Union as a “Polish refugee returning to his homeland.”

After many twists and turns, he arrived in Paris, where he became an integral part of the Lubavitch community which was beginning to establish itself there.

In Paris, R' Hendel painted Chassidim from other Chassidic courts that he met for the first time, and also visited art galleries.

When the Rebbe Rayatz, who had already settled in New York, received a letter from R' Chench Hendel describing how his life had been shattered and asking for the Rebbe's advice on how to reconcile his art with his

Chassidus, the Rebbe responded with profound wisdom. The Rebbe explained that for a true Chassid, all aspects of life must unite in perfect harmony. This includes using art as a means of serving and apprehending G-d. The Rebbe's response infused new life into a broken R' Hendel, and he returned to his painting with renewed passion.

After the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz, R' Hendel expressed his grief through one of his most powerful pencil sketches. The drawing depicted a desolate desert with several bare trees. In the foreground, Chassidim in black hats are sitting on the ground, hands on their heads in mourning. In the sky above, a blurred image of the Rebbe Rayatz appeared, with the faces of previous Chabad Rebbeim behind him, welcoming the new soul that had ascended to heaven.



The Primary Role of the Artist

The events and personal tragedies that R' Hendel had experienced continued to weigh heavily on him. He repeatedly asked himself whether he would continue painting, if this was the solution for him, and again directed his questions to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe, with his original approach, not only did not discourage him from his artistic labors - but encouraged him not to abandon his talents and to utilize them maximally for divine service.

He sent a letter to the Rebbe in which he wrote that he felt very broken, and sometimes fell into despair and could not find his place.

In a long letter the Rebbe sent him (Igros Vol 4, Letter 996), he addresses the primary role of the artist, guiding him to look correctly at life's events:

...I was very happy to read that you are using your artistic talent, that you are preparing for an

exhibition and that you have already received good reviews in the press. I am certain that you will continue to use the talent with which G-d has blessed you to strengthen your Judaism and your fear of Heaven.

...I must suffice with a general observation. My observation is based on the saying of the Baal Shem Tov - which my father-in-law the Rebbe would often quote - that a person can derive an important lesson in divine service from everything their eyes see and everything their ears hear.

As you surely know, the artist's primary talent lies in their ability to distance themselves from the external shell of things and, while ignoring their external form, to look deeply within, see their essence, and be able to convey this in their painting. In this way, the subject of the painting is revealed as it has never been revealed before, since its internal content was hidden by secondary matters. The artist exposes the essence of the thing they are painting and causes

the person looking at the painting to see it in a different, more true light, and to realize that their initial perception was lacking.

This is one of the fundamentals in a person's service to their Creator.

As we know from the Torah - and especially from Chassidic teaching - the entire creation originates from G-d's word, and G-d's word is what brings it into existence and continues to sustain it at every moment. However, the divine power of contraction hides the divine vitality, and we see only its external form (that is, the physical reality).

Our mission in life - based on the simple belief that "...the L-rd is G-d, there is none beside Him" - is to approach everything in life from this perspective. Each of us should strive to reveal, as much as possible, the heavenly essence in every thing, and minimize the concealment caused by the external components of creation... Therefore, we must be very careful that secondary and external matters do not obscure the essence of life and its absolute purpose.

A person may experience difficulties, tests, and challenges in distinguishing good from evil. But these are merely means through which one should reach life's goal - that their soul will be elevated through good deeds in this world... Thus, a person must never allow their difficulties, or even the fact that they might sometimes stumble and fall, to overcome the joy they should feel as a child of G-d... (Translated and adapted from a letter dated 24 Adar II, 5711)

The Rebbe's letter breathed new life into R' Hendel. He felt a new spirit emanating from Lubavitch in New York... As a result, he decided to move from London and live near the Rebbe. And so he did, moving to Crown Heights.

Now, living in physical proximity to the Rebbe, he flourished more than ever. Here he was, a renowned and esteemed artist, with a place of honor behind the Rebbe during tefillos and farbrengens. Soon, R' Hendel became a familiar, central, and important figure in the Chabad community in Crown Heights.

Rabbi Shmuel Lew heard from R' Hendel that during one of his visits to Rebbetzin Chana, he said it was difficult for him to paint the Rebbe with a simple hat and without a shtreimel... The Rebbetzin responded wittily: "The elders are looking for a 'shtreimel,' while the young ones are looking for a 'Rebbe!'"

"We Have an Artist of Our Own..."

In the following years, the Rebbe continued the unique approach he set forth throughout the years - Chassidus is not against art, and art does not contradict a life of Torah and mitzvos. One must find a way to harness talents to reveal Hashem's presence in the world, including in the world of art. As was his custom, the Rebbe emphasized that times had changed, and while in the past there was no room for mixing in your self-centered feelings in avodas Hashem, and one needed to practice 'iskafya' - now, before the coming of the Moshiach, the situation was different...

In one of his yechidus audiences, the Rebbe said to him explicitly: "In the past, the matter of 'paintings' was rejected among Chassidim. We did not even have pictures of the elder Chassidim. However, now, in the days of Moshiach, when a Jew can bring another Jew closer through a painting - he must do so. Why search for foreign artists when we have an artist of our own who was within the 'dalet amos' of Tomchei Tmimim?..."

Another reference by the Rebbe to R' Hendel's talent came in a letter he sent on the 6th of Nissan, 5735, where he added in his own handwriting at the bottom of the letter: "*With holiday blessings for health and utilizing your sublime talent in painting, 'How great are Your works, O L-rd' with joy.*"

During his years in New York, R' Hendel had an intense love for the Rebbe, and during his annual yechidus on his birthday, he would always plead with the Rebbe to take better care of his health and reduce fasting. His heart ached when he saw the Rebbe disregarding

his physical well-being. On one occasion, the Rebbe responded: “Nu, I’ll try.”

In early Kislev 5725, R’ Hendel entered for yechidus, and wanting to cheer up the Rebbe, whom he felt was not feeling well, he told the Rebbe that he regularly invites a minyan of Tmimim to his home for Shabbos meals. The Rebbe responded that “presumably they are talmidim from Eretz HaKodesh.” R’ Hendel affirmed this and added that during the meal he tells them stories about Lubavitch.

The Rebbe advised him to paint Lubavitch with all its details, everything in its place; so that when they tell stories about Lubavitch, they will know where the house stands and where the courtyard is, etc. The Rebbe added that he should not ask other people for details about the town, as they would only confuse him... (According to the journal of Rabbi M.M. Wolf).



Paint “U’faratzta”

When R’ Hendel once went in for a yechidus, the Rebbe asked him to paint a picture depicting “U’faratzta” (breaking through)!

R’ Hendel asked the Rebbe to explain this concept, and the Rebbe explained it with a metaphor:

There is a large river with many waters, and in the middle of the river, there is a dam that directs the waters to flow in their way and also to prevent flooding. This - the Rebbe concluded - is the concept of “U’faratzta” from the language of “breaking through a fence” - so that the waters can reach the fields and irrigate them, and thus grow beautiful and good fruits.

In 5732 (1972), the Rebbe suggested that he hold an exhibition in Eretz Yisrael featuring a selection of his paintings.

R’ Hendel, as a Chassid, immediately complied. He organized himself and went to Israel for several months, rented an apartment in Nachalat Har Chabad, which had been recently established, and on one of the days, the exhibition was displayed at the ‘American Zionist’ building in Tel Aviv, where a large Chabad evening was also held, with masses of Jews from all circles coming to see and be impressed by his paintings.

R’ Hendel, of course, utilized his stay to draw his Chassidic sketches from the sights he saw in Eretz Yisrael.

Thus, painting with renewed inspiration and impressive intensity, R’ Hendel exhibited his works in art galleries and Chassidic events, from New York to Australia.

The impact of his displays on the audience was great;

people remembered their hometown, the spiritual life, and the pleasant atmosphere of the “shtetl.” After one of his exhibitions, the city rabbi met him and said that the ten days during which his works were exhibited had a more powerful effect on his community than his daily work among the community over a decade.

Fame and Renown as an Awe-Inspiring Jewish Artist

R’ Hendel’s life as a Chassid was beautifully interwoven with his life as an artist.

Once, he answered his nephew’s question: “You want to know what an artist is? I’ll tell you. As you know, I sit behind the Rebbe during farbrengens. When the Rebbe began to deliver the second sicha - I completely forgot what he spoke about in the first. But what I remember clearly is that I saw a play of light and shadow, an image reflected under the Rebbe’s armchair.”

Lieberman would sit and paint in his studio in Brooklyn. For about a quarter of a century, he lived in Crown Heights. The children called him ‘Uncle Hendel,’ and the art students who studied under him - whom he deeply influenced - called him ‘Maestro Hendel.’

This period was the most productive in his artistic life. It yielded hundreds of paintings and sketches on Jewish themes. Indeed, during this period, he gained recognition as a Jewish painter who expressed himself in an inimitable colorful style, continuously inspiring the admirers of his works and leaving a deep impression on those who viewed them.

The famous painter Michael Muchnik, who was an art student at the Rhode Island School of Design in the 1970s, speaks of Lieberman as the main attraction of Chassidic Crown Heights: “More than anything else, it was Lieberman’s paintings that made me feel the



Drawing: Chassid in a Soviet labor camp, crying out, “Save me”

spirit and atmosphere of Lubavitch, the spirit of Chassidus. Looking at his paintings, I saw the spirit of Yiddishkeit. Hendel enriched the world of Jewish art.”

R’ Hendel fused his Chassidishkeit and art into an intensive, ongoing life project. Despite everything he went through, R’ Hendel’s spirit was not broken, and he continued to paint even on his deathbed. From there, he would occasionally send very personal, touching sketches as a gift to the Rebbe.

On the 13th of Adar II, 5736 (1976), he returned his soul to its Creator after a difficult illness. He left no descendants, but his mark is still clearly visible even nowadays. His authentic paintings decorate ‘Nichoach’ tapes and adorn the walls of many Chassidic homes, spreading a pure, original Chassidic atmosphere. ■

(Based on the book “Reb Mendel”)

Kfar Chabad, Oil on Canvas:

**Zalman
Kleinman**

*Recently, I received
an article from the
journal 'Letter to
the Diaspora'...
accompanied by
your drawings,
which made an
impression on me
precisely because
they are drawn as
they are - without
artifice and without
even artistic
contrivances*

**From a letter
of the Rebbe**





The Chassidic painter Rabbi Zalman Kleinman was born in Russia to his father Rabbi Yaakov and his mother Mrs. Rivka Kleinman. His parents arrived in Russia during World War I. The father was a Gerrer Chassid, a *yerei shamayim*, and very meticulous in his performance of mitzvos.

He spent his childhood in the city of Leningrad at his parents' home, along with his two sisters, Fania and Rochel (Zamir). However, his happy childhood days were short-lived. In the summer of 1941, a front opened between Germany and the Soviet Union.

Soon, battles, bombings, and hunger began to take their toll on the civilians. The front was rapidly approaching the great city of Leningrad. The young Zalman was only about eight years old at that time.

One day, the authorities announced the evacuation of all the children from Leningrad to a distant and safe place - both to save them and so that their parents could devote themselves to the defense of the city in peace of mind.

With worry and pain, R' Yaakov Kleinman and his wife were forced to take their daughter Rochel out of the house and hand her over to strangers, on her way to an unknown place. Later, Fania, the thirteen-year-old, and her younger brother Zalman, the eight-year-old, were also forced to leave.

Shortly before the siege imposed on Leningrad, R' Yaakov Kleinman managed to meet his

sister, Mrs. Ita Sassonkin, at the border of the city of Leningrad. The meeting was emotional, and the farewell even more so. Before they parted, the two made a pact: whoever survives will take it upon themselves to care for the children of the other...

Countless tribulations befell young Zalman and his sister, who made every effort to protect her brother, but after a few months, the two were separated by the authorities' orders. Zalman was sent to a children's institution.

A small Jewish boy about eight years old, among a crowd of non-Jewish children, many of whom were older than him. His life was unbearable. Harassment, abuse, humiliation were his lot. The immense suffering was his portion for three and a half years, until he reached the age of 11.

Painting in Wartime

Even at this age, Zalman's artistic talents were evident. One of the instructors at the institution where he stayed took a liking to him. Whenever she needed drawings, posters, and signs for her class, she would call Zalman from his class, and he would do all the drawing work for her, which angered his own class instructor for exploiting his talents for the benefit of a competing class.

In the year 5705, World War II ended, having cost millions of lives on the front lines and within the cities of Russia. People died from starvation, bombings, and the Nazis' deportations to extermination camps.

Then it became clear that the couple, R' Yaakov and his wife Rivka, who remained in Leningrad, died of starvation in the severe famine that prevailed in the city at that time.

In those days, the family was practically shattered. Fania, the older sister, worked in the Russian military industry. The sister Rochel was staying in an orphanage far away, in Siberia. Meanwhile, the younger brother was adopted by the gentile teacher. She organized all the formal documents for his adoption as her son. She loved him very much, cared for him as a son, providing him with nurture and all his needs. She valued him highly for his intelligence, for his talents in drawing and art, and for the knowledge he acquired through reading books.

After the war, he was about to return with her to her home in Leningrad, with the declared intention of severing all ties with his family forever. At her instruction, he sent letters to his sisters, in which he wrote, under her guidance, that we must sever all ties between us for eternity.

His father, R' Yaakov Kleinman, from the next world, feared more than





R Zalman Kleinman standing next to his painting of the Rebbe

anything, beyond just his physical distancing from the rest of his family, the spiritual distance, that the young boy would abandon his ancestral heritage.

At this stage, divine providence intervened, aiming to extract the precious from the worthless and reunite the Chassidic family once again. Zalman's aunt, Mrs. Ita Sassonkin, managed to contact her father-in-law, the Chassid Rabbi Nachum Shmaryahu Sassonkin. She joined him in Samarkand, where there was an active Chassidic community.

It seemed that she had finally found some peace, but one night, she dreamed that her brother woke her with a gentle touch on her shoulder and said just one word: "The children!"

She woke up trembling and immediately understood what it was about. At the outbreak

of the war, they had made a pact that whoever survived the war would take care of the other's children. The dream recurred again and again, and she had no choice but to share the story of the vow and the dream with her father-in-law.

He urged her to contact the children, which was indeed critical before Zalman was fully adopted. After a long and exhausting journey, she arrived at the children's home where little Zalman had already been formally adopted by the teacher. He became emotionally attached to his adoptive mother and was very happy to return with her and all the children to Leningrad.

The aunt made efforts to convince the management and the instructor to give up the adoption. She explained to them that she was the child's aunt, and her brother, the child's



R' Zalman's classic painting that became the 'symbol' of traveling to the Rebbe

father, had asked her to raise him if he died in the war. After many tears and pleas, Zalman, twelve and a half years old, was officially handed over to his aunt. Later, the aunt also picked up her niece Rochel, and the three returned to Samarkand, to their grandparents' house.

Rabbi Sassonkin began to influence his grandson to return to a life of Torah and mitzvos, and he took responsibility for his education. He did this gently and with endless patience. With Rabbi Sassonkin's wise and non-pressuring approach, Zalman began to draw closer to Judaism on his own, to ask, to know, and to learn.

A few months later, a grand Bar Mitzva celebration was held for him, according to the standards of those days of hardship and scarcity. Zalman recited a Chassidic maamar, and the listeners were filled with admiration

for the child's achievements, when just a few months earlier he did not know the basics and did not speak Yiddish.

In the year 1947, the Sassonkin family, along with their 'adopted children' from the Kleinman family, left Russia using fake Polish passports. After a long journey, they arrived at the final transit station in Paris, where they stayed for about two and a half years.

After a two-year stay in France, the family members were fortunate to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael aboard the ship "Artza."

After a period of acclimatization, Zalman began studying at the 'Tomchei Tmimim' yeshiva in Pardes, Lod.

Bursting Talent

The painting talents that first manifested as a child during the war period burst forth in full

force at this stage of his life. His friends from the yeshiva recount that they often found him sitting among the orange trees surrounding the yeshiva, brush in hand, painting with great fervor.

This passion for painting led him to leave the yeshiva in Lod and move to Kfar Chabad. Here, he began to dedicate himself to painting.

He didn't have a proper place to live, but he tried to hide it from the people who asked him. He was content with what he had and didn't want to take any assistance from others.

When Rabbi Ephraim Wolf, the head of the yeshiva, heard about Zalman's way of life, he tried to help him. He approached Rabbi Sassonkin, who was his educator, and suggested that the boy live in the yeshiva and engage in painting "and no one would disturb him." When Rabbi Sassonkin spoke about this with Zalman, he refused the offer, saying, "Is

it not enough that I do not help the yeshiva? Should I live at its expense?"

Zalman continued to live this way until one morning Rabbi Elimelech Perman, of blessed memory, a widower and elder Chabad Chassid, who was accustomed to rising early, noticed him. One morning, when he arrived at the shul, he saw him sleeping on the bench as usual, with his hand serving as a pillow and his coat as a blanket. He approached Zalman with an offer to sleep on a folding bed in his apartment. At first, Zalman refused, but Rabbi Perman insisted, and eventually, Zalman moved in to sleep there. In due time, he managed to secure his own room.

Meanwhile, everyone already knew that Zalman painted with great talent.

They say that once Mr. Zalman Shazar, then head of the Jewish Agency, came to visit Kfar Chabad. The activist Rabbi Pinye Altheus brought him on a tour, including to Zalman's

R' Zalman beautifully captured iconic "Chassidic moments" in Kfar Chabad





room, and showed him his paintings. Shazar was very impressed and immediately awarded him a scholarship for art studies. Zalman approached several art schools and showed them his works, but in all of them, he was told that his level far exceeded the level of studies at that institution.

During that visit, Shazar saw a Chassidic painting illustrating a farbrengen of Chassidim full of vitality and emotion. Shazar expressed his astonishment that this was not the farbrengen he was familiar with (as is known, Shazar regularly attended the 'official' Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengens held in Kfar Chabad). R' Zalman Kleinman was unfazed and replied in characteristically Chassidic simplicity: "When you are present, that is the 'official' farbrengen; what you see in my painting is the farbrengen after you leave..."

In 1954, Zalman enlisted in the army, and throughout his thirty months of service, he did not eat from the military kitchen due to his strict adherence to the laws of kashrus.

Already during his basic training, he became known for his drawing talent. The Chief Rabbi of the Army, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, transferred him to the military rabbinate and assigned him to decorate shuls in various military camps and illustrate the weekly magazine *Machanayim*. Since he was not attached to a permanent base, he received a food allowance, and the issue of kashrus was resolved.

The Chassidic Artist Gains International Recognition

At the end of his military service, he asked the Rebbe for permission to travel to the US to study painting. The Rebbe replied: If you want to study painting, the place is Paris, France.

He indeed traveled there and visited exhibitions and museums. There he met his soulmate, Rosa Neuhaus, a descendant of a rabbinical dynasty tracing back to the BaCH. The two married happily, and after their wedding, the couple moved to the US.

The lives of the Kleinman couple were not easy. Neither of them had parents, and they were without support. Initially, Zalman worked odd jobs, but his income was minimal. After the children were born, he began to earn money with great difficulty, including by illustrating for publishing houses. Over time, he started working at the *Algemeiner Journal* as an art editor and cartoonist. Gradually, he gained recognition as a painter, and his name preceded him. Over time, exhibitions of his works were held at the Brooklyn Museum, in Canada, in Philadelphia, and more.

But mainly, he gained appreciation and admiration in the Jewish world, among Chassidim. His paintings were a wonderful illustration of Jewish and Chassidic themes.

Once he gained recognition as a renowned painter, his financial situation improved, but he continued to live a modest lifestyle as before. Much of the money he earned was donated to tzedaka, mainly through “matan b’ser” [anonymous giving].

R’ Zalman Kleinman was an honest man, modest and unassuming; a noble soul, possessing intellectual wealth in all areas of life. He quietly engaged in painting, and peacefully dedicated his free hours to studying Torah. He never sought fame or students. When parents came to him asking him to teach their children painting, he would say to them: “If the child is naturally inclined towards painting, I will agree to teach him. If not, do not pressure the child to learn it, because it is very hard work that requires immense inner strength.”

In his various works, he expressed his Chassidic feelings. His paintings are filled with Jewish and Chassidic themes, such as devotion in prayer, gatherings, Yom Kippur davening, kiddush levana, joyful Chassidic dances, and a hachnossas Sefer Torah. In addition to these, he also specialized in landscape painting, portraits, and book illustrations.



At first glance at a selection of his paintings, it seems that R’ Zalman loved to depict moments of devotion and prayer, but this is not the case. R’ Zalman also knew how to incorporate motifs of joy and even Chassidic humor, such as the famous painting “The Somersault,” or “The Madman,” as well as the drunk being “returned” to his home by his fellow Chassidim.

R’ Zalman would always look around him and draw. When he lived in Kfar Chabad, his paintings reflected the Chassidic atmosphere of the village in those days, with its old houses, shacks, puddles, and mud that filled the village. When he was in Crown Heights, he skillfully captured the surrounding atmosphere - American-style houses, snow, and even American cars that were double parked...

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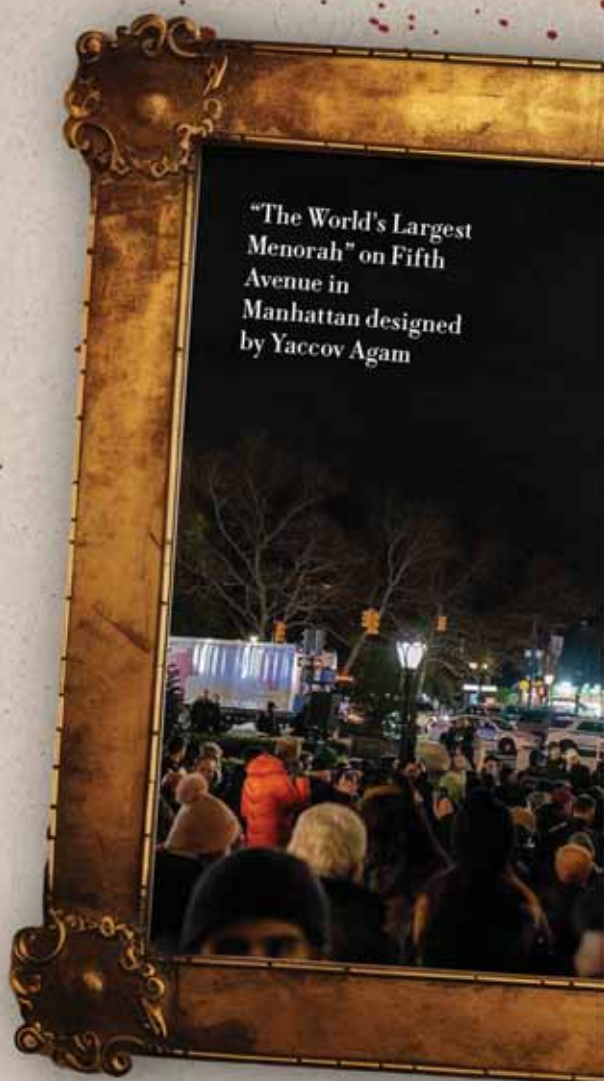
*The shadow, at first glance,
seems to be the result of
something that conceals the
light and its source.*

*However, according to our
Torah ... if the shadow is
placed in its proper form
and in its proper place, it
too becomes a source of
influence, like light.*

*- From a letter of the
Rebbe, commenting on an
album with Agam's work*

**Kinetic
Sculptor
and Artist
Yaacov Agam:**

Light, Shadows & Menorahs





The artworks of artist Yaacov Agam can be found all around the world and are considered significant art pieces after he gained international recognition as one of the founders of kinetic art.

Yaacov Agam (Gibstein) was born in Iyar 5688 (May 1928) in Rishon LeZion, to Rabbi Yehoshua Gibstein and Kendal Yocheved Gibstein, one of seven siblings.

In his childhood, he studied in a traditional cheder, but in his adulthood, he went on to study art at the Bezalel School in Yerushalayim and later in Zurich and Paris.

At the beginning of his career, Agam worked on developing 'Op Art,' which deals with optical illusions. At age 27, he exhibited colorful wood reliefs at an exhibition in Paris entitled "Paintings in Movement," which were unique in that the artwork changed according to the viewer's position relative to it.

In the 1930s, Agam created sculptures that integrated water, fire, and music, operated by computer control. Among these works was the "Water and Fire" fountain at Dizengoff Square in Tel Aviv.

Agam also created many works in diverse fields: he developed the "Agamograph" technique, display using Plexiglas, designed stamps, invented the "Agamilim" writing method, where changing one letter in a word changes the



entire word. He conceived a visual education program, and the Weizmann Institute collaborated with him on the “Agam Program” for developing visual thinking, primarily intended for early childhood education.

Many of his works are characterized by movement or changing appearance when the viewer’s perspective shifts. According to him, he was deeply influenced by mystical concepts in Judaism.

Over the years, Yaacov Agam held many exhibitions worldwide, including retrospective exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and the Guggenheim in New York. Agam placed his works in the Élysée Palace in Paris in 1972 at the invitation of then-Prime Minister Georges Pompidou, and created a musical fountain in the La Défense district of Paris.

Throughout the years, he received various awards and certificates of appreciation for his works.

Since the 1940s, Agam has resided in France. After the passing of his wife Clila in the 1980s - who was a descendant of a Chassidic Rebbe - Agam began wearing a hat, and essentially became much more strengthened in his Judaism. Subsequently, he started growing a beard and wearing a large kippa, with tzitzit prominently visible beneath his jacket.

Connection with the Rebbe

Agam’s connection with the Rebbe began in the mid-1930s, thanks to his friend Mr. Yosef Ciechanover, who headed the Israeli defense mission the USA and was in close contact with the Rebbe. “When I would occasionally visit New York, he would take me to the Rebbe’s large farbrengens,” Mr. Agam recalled. “Thousands would be present at these farbrengens, and we would sit not far from the Rebbe. Sometimes, between sichos, when the crowd was singing, the Rebbe would exchange words with me.

“In these conversations, the Rebbe showed great interest in my artistic work. He asked me to send him photographs of my works.”

Prior to Yud-Aleph Nissan 5737 (1977), Agam sent the Rebbe a birthday greeting and attached an album with a selection of his works. Mr. Ciechanover presented the album to the Rebbe. In response, Agam received a long and fascinating letter that somewhat reflects the Rebbe’s approach to modern art (free translation).

B”H, 28th of Sivan, 5737

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To Mr. Yaacov Agam,

Shalom u’vracha!

Due to many preoccupations, my response has been delayed, and with it, my apologies.

First and foremost, I offer my heartfelt thanks for your blessings and good wishes. And I answer you with blessing with the words of our Sages z”l: “Anyone who blesses, is blessed by Hashem, the source of blessings,” and His blessing is far greater than the original. May Hashem bless you abundantly, from His full hand, with everything you require.

Additionally, I thank you again for the magnificent album. Even though it is entirely outside of my field, the overall impression is striking to the eye, even for someone who is not an expert in art. Surely, this work is intended not only for experts. Particularly, one can see originality in utilizing elements that, at first glance, have no apparent connection to art, such as light and shadow, lines, and various geometric shapes. The combination and fusion of these elements in good taste, as seen in the album, is impressive, even, as mentioned, to someone without an expert’s eye in this field.

I was especially impressed by the use of a range of colors, both primary and secondary, which form a beautiful illumination.

As is customary for the Jewish people, to seek and find in everything a point that relates to the mission of the Jewish people, the whole nation, and each individual, in the life of man on this

earth, I take the liberty to make one comment, at least on a general level. Specifically, even in the words of the blessing written on the cover, besides the content and the wording, you have employed your artistic power with a color combination of the letters themselves along with their shadows.

The shadow, at first glance, seems to be the result of something that conceals the light and its source. However, according to our Torah, the Torah of truth, and in the words of our Sages, all that Hashem created in His world, He created for His honor. Thus, the shadow is also part of this. That is to say, if the shadow is placed in its proper form and in its proper place, it too becomes a source of influence, like light, even though the revelation of this light and its influence is in a different manner from the revelation and influence of light in its plain form. Just like in the aforementioned example, the impression of the letters by themselves is not the same as when they appear together with their shadow - this occurs when the shadow is in its rightful place, and its fusion with the light is in the appropriate manner.

From this, there is a general lesson, and together with it, also a specific one for human life, even in "shadow" days, the "gray" days. Although at first glance - in our physical and material world - the shadows seem to outnumber the lights, and material outweighs the spirit, etc., the person must fulfill his mission in this world according to the saying of our Sages, that even the shadow can be for the honor of the Creator. On the contrary, the light then surpasses the darkness, meaning that through, by, and in conjunction with the darkness, one can achieve this. And in this way, one can approach all matters of darkness in our world, as it is within man's ability to "turn darkness into light."

With respect and blessings, in the same spirit of gratitude for your good wishes and attentiveness.



Agam analyzed the Rebbe's approach to his art:

"From the content of the letter and our conversations, I learned to recognize that the Rebbe was very aware of the visual significance of form. I don't mean only artistic understanding, but the ability to see and feel things beyond verbal language. He could see things beyond the visible, like seeing the light behind the shadow.

"Judaism ascribes great significance to the visual. In the Torah, we find the rainbow in the sky, symbolizing the covenant between Creator and creation, Yaakov's ladder, and other visually significant images. The word stops and defines, and therefore also hurts. But form is a living thing that creates and changes. There is no form in nature that does not change. The word is a lower stage of expression. Above it is poetry. Above poetry stands the song. Higher than the song are the quiet and silence within form.

“Most people don’t know how to ‘see’ and therefore are forced to translate everything into words. One translates to English, another to French, a third to Russian. And everything they cannot define in a word, they also cannot grasp in thought. This essentially makes them visually illiterate. The Rebbe deeply understood visual significance. Once we discussed visual education, and in this context, we mentioned the biblical verse, ‘And he saw that it was good’ - the ability to see.”

The World’s Largest Menorah

In the 1980s, the Rebbe spoke about placing menorahs in public places to publicize the Chanuka miracle. “It was important for us to fulfill the Rebbe’s words in the ‘big city’ in the most public and best way possible,” said Rabbi Shmuel Butman a’h, chairman of the Chabad Youth Organization in New York.

Thus, in 1978, a menorah measuring about ten meters was born. The menorah was called “The Largest Menorah in the World” and was thus reported in global media, which extensively and prominently covered its lighting ceremonies each day of Chanuka, essentially using it as a symbol of the holiday.

“We used a classic design. At that time, it was not yet common to make menorahs according to the Rambam’s specifications,” Rabbi Butman added. “After much effort, boruch Hashem, we found a company that deals with designing and building metal and iron products.

“The company wanted \$5,000 for the design and construction, a not insignificant sum in those days. I then called the supporter Zev (William) Goldberg z”l, who was the president of the Diamond Exchange. He was so excited that he came to our office himself and donated the money.

“For nine years, the world’s largest menorah captured media attention, as a result of the unprecedented ‘pirumei nissa - publicizing of the miracle.’ Every year, journalists and

photographers flocked to document the lighting. Even *The New York Times*, which is not particularly friendly toward Jewish matters, made sure to send staff to cover the events.

“After the Rebbe spoke about the menorahs needing to be made with straight branches, it was clear that a change was needed. Indeed, in 1987, artist Yaacov Agam designed the menorah in its current configuration. A model of this menorah was privileged to stand on the Rebbe’s desk for three days.

“According to Yaacov Agam, the Rebbe wanted the menorah to be made to the largest size possible from a halachic standpoint - twenty cubits, which is about 32 feet. The cost of the menorah was \$25,000.”

Yaacov Agam: Because the Rebbe placed great importance on the visual aspect, he also attached great importance to correcting the common misconception about the menorah’s shape in the Mikdash. It is customary to draw it with curved branches, similar to the relief on the Arch of Titus. However, the Rebbe, relying on the Rambam’s statement that the menorah in the Mikdash had diagonal branches, recognized the differences in meaning between the various shapes and insisted that the menorah of the Mikdash be drawn according to halacha and not in its Roman version.

Chabad Chassidim have worked and continue to work to spread the light of Judaism everywhere, and therefore I always found it appropriate to help, assist, and take part in their important endeavor.

Chabad Chassidim approached me with a request to design a giant menorah to be placed in a public space in the city. The menorah, ten meters high - which is the maximum height permitted according to halacha - I designed in a form influenced by the diagonal branch shape of the menorah in the Mikdash. Three such menorahs were erected by Chabad Chassidim - in Manhattan, in Vancouver, Canada, and in Los Angeles. When I went to the Rebbe and presented him with a small model of the giant



menorah, he was very enthusiastic about the beauty and special elegance I had given it...

After the giant menorah was placed on Fifth Avenue, in the heart of Manhattan, Mr. Agam came to the Rebbe on the 26th of Kislev 5747 (1986) and gave the Rebbe, as mentioned, a miniature model of the menorah he had just finished designing. The Rebbe responded with great warmth: "Thank you for designing the menorah in accordance with the Rambam's view. You will light the menorahs in their full size in Los Angeles and New York - may this be a good beginning for the entire United States and the entire world."

As Agam puts it: "The Rebbe gave Judaism what Chassidus initially provided - the ability for simple, working people to draw closer to the light of Torah and the opportunity to connect to the spiritual riches of Judaism."

Helping Others Brings Only Blessing

Over the years, Mr. Agam assisted the activities of Chabad shluchim in various locations. One of the places he helped by

donating his artworks was the Chabad House in the Krayot area. Rabbi Gluckowsky, the Chabad rabbi of Rechovot, connected him with them, as he recounted:

"One evening, Reb Zusha Wilyamowsky entered my home together with several Chabad Chassidim from Krayot, led by Rabbi Moshe Oirechman and his brother Rabbi Nosson from Acco. Reb Zusha began to speak about the fire that had struck the Chabad building in Kiryat Motzkin, and their plan to organize a fundraising evening at the Dan Hotel in Haifa to restore and expand the institution.

"Reb Zusha said that since I was in contact with artist Yaacov Agam (in the same year his wife had passed away, and Reb Zusha knew about the connection that had formed between us as a result of assistance during the shiva period), he requested that Mr. Agam bring one of his art pieces to be sold at a public auction to receive a decent sum.

"I asked Reb Zusha to speak with me on the side and updated him that since Mr. Agam lives in Paris, the relationship between us was not strong enough, and when it would



get stronger, I thought to request something for Chabad mosdos in Rechovot. In response, he said: 'I have a tradition from my teachers that when helping another Jew, no harm will come out of it, only blessing.' I told him that anyway, my community would not accept this, but if it's an order, I would accept. Rabbi Zusha immediately replied: 'Order!'

"Indeed, Mr. Agam donated a special item for the dinner and even participated in it himself. Because of this, Chabad institutions in Krayot maintained contact with him for a period afterward. That same year I saw wonderful blessings from various directions, which taught me that we shluchim must be generous with each other and not, heaven forbid, be grudging toward each other - because from a good deed done for another Jew only comes blessing."

The connection between Rabbi Oirechman and Mr. Agam continued for many years. At times, Rabbi Oirechman would include Yaacov Agam and his son in a visit for Shabbos in the Rebbe's court, during which he participated in tefillos with the Rebbe, and even in a farbrengen, and was privileged to receive special encouragement from the Rebbe.

One of the years, he approached the Rebbe and told him about participating in the Chabad dinner in Krayot and that he was donating generously to them, as well as to Chabad in California. The Rebbe responded with a smile: "When you give a finger - they request the entire hand." In other words: You must give more!...

• • •

"The Rebbe's greatness is in that he succeeded in giving, sharing, and presenting the great spirituality that exists in the sources of Judaism to thousands of people," says Yaacov Agam. "Through his words and actions, the Rebbe granted great meaning to life for many, and awakened their hidden and concealed faith. In this way, he provided a great spiritual momentum that burned and illuminated throughout the world." ■

His paintings express a wide range of times and events, from biblical paintings such as Lot's escape from the burning Sodom, the Covenant Between the Parts, the Splitting of the Sea, Dovid HaMelech, Shimshon HaGibor, and Yiftach HaGiladi, to the days of the 'maggid' delivering his sermon in the market, and the days of the Holocaust. R' Zalman also excelled in depicting the Haggadah shel Pesach in his impressive collection of paintings.

Paintings that Made an Impression on the Rebbe

His works had a profound impact on viewers. They stirred in them longings and yearnings for Yiddishkeit, including in the hearts of Jews who were still distant from Yiddishkeit. His images are in thousands of homes around the world and in various institutions, both in the homes of Torah observant Jews and in other homes. Additionally, his illustrations fill many books today, which have been distributed and sold in tens of thousands of copies.

Regarding the impression his paintings made on those who saw them, one can learn from the letter the Rebbe wrote him (Igros Kodesh, Vol. 15, p. 572):

B'H, the 9th of Elul 5717

Brooklyn.

The avreich Zalman, may he live long

Peace and blessings!

Recently, I received an article from the journal 'Letter to the Diaspora' (in English, from the month of Tammuz 5717) accompanied by his drawings, which made an impression on me precisely because they are drawn as they are - without artifice and without even artistic contrivances. It would be appropriate and correct that in this manner he would create an entire album of Kfar Chabad, not only in its current state but also as it was when they first arrived there, so that in this album one could

also see the development of the village, as well as the usefulness of the village's current form, given the hope that it will develop even further, if this series of drawings is successful.

One should also consider establishing these [drawings] in print, whether as an album, a series of postcards, or individual postcards. The main point, as mentioned, is that the drawings should come in their natural simplicity. Do not be discouraged if someone says that for this purpose a photograph would be suitable and a drawing is unnecessary. As is evident in practice, there is a difference between a photograph and an artwork created by an artist, even one created in the artistic style closest to reality.

It is understood that if there are expenses related to presenting the aforementioned drawings, they will be paid from a special fund, including compensation for effort, etc., and I await his response with good tidings regarding the aforementioned.

It is unnecessary to add that my intention is not only for the houses and the like, but also and primarily drawings of village life - from the spiritual life within spirituality, down to the physical life in physicality.

With bracha for a kesiva v'chasima tova, and for good tidings as mentioned above.

Paintings that 'Live' for Posterity

At a relatively young age, he departed from this world, having endured much suffering in his short life. On the 18th of Menachem Av 5755, he passed away, leaving behind a generation of righteous descendants, true Chassidic children and grandchildren, who continue to work in the shlichus of the Rebbe. His Chassidic paintings continue to 'live' and illuminate thousands of homes, depicting true Chassidic scenes with intense emotion and vitality. ■

(Based on the memoirs of his sister, Ms. Rochel Zamir, in her book 'The Mission of My Life')

Baruch Nachson:

An Art Show Hosted by the Rebbe



“

Many generations have passed, and the art of kosher painting has not been rectified, and you will rectify this,” the Rebbe told me. From that moment, I felt an enormous weight on my shoulders and tremendous responsibility.



The Rebbe visiting Baruch Nachshon's art exhibit, 6 Kislev 5739

Reb Baruch Nachshon was born in Haifa on the 15th of Menachem Av, 5699 (1939). He grew up in an environment far from Torah and Judaism.

His painting career essentially began in kindergarten... when his teacher wanted some quiet from young Baruch, she would give him papers and crayons, and that was the only thing that would calm him down...

Even in school, he couldn't find peace. "The atmosphere there weighed heavily on me emotionally. I would go out to the fields. I spent much time hiking in the mountains, developing my artistic imagination, also using the shadows of clouds and sun through a vibrating glass door in our home. I could observe for hours through this glass, thereby enriching my imaginative and artistic powers."

Beginnings: Nachshon's Professional and Spiritual Masters

At age 11, he met the art instructor Shlomo Nirni (Narinsky), one of the first photographers who lived in Eretz Yisrael at the beginning of the century. He lived in a solitary house on Mount Carmel, and young Baruch was the only one he permitted to stand behind him as he photographed. "He felt I was his spiritual heir in art. I definitely received the artistic atmosphere from Nirni."

Baruch's parents, recognizing their son's potential, encouraged him to study with Nirni. For several years, he visited him weekly, learning the

craft while developing a deep soul connection with the elderly artist.

During his teenage years, he studied at Kerem B'Yavneh, a religious-Zionist yeshiva.

One night, on the eve of the 19th of Kislev, a student in the yeshiva announced they were going to Kfar Chabad for the Yud-Tes Kislev celebration. Baruch asked, "What is Yud-Tes Kislev, and what is Kfar Chabad?" All they could tell him was that it was a village of Chassidim who had managed to escape Stalin's clutches, and that in every corner there was a barrel of vodka with Chassidim dancing and falling drunk by the roadsides... Nachshon thought this sounded interesting and decided to go see the spectacle for himself.

"When we entered a mostly-empty hall, I heard a group of Chassidim singing melodies that immediately captured my heart," he later recounted, "and lifted my spirit to high spheres of holiness. I felt the Jewish soul crying out and I said to myself: I belong here."

"I remember that when I first had a private audience with the Rebbe, one of the questions I was asked was 'How did you get here?' and I told him the full story and the Rebbe responded with a broad smile... You can say that this trip is what brought me to Chabad."

After the farbrengen in Kfar Chabad, they took us to the yeshiva in Lod, where I saw spiritually elevated young men. It was a strange sight (one that still stands before my eyes) - Yemenite refugees together with Russian refugees sitting together in a crowded, unaesthetic hall, around a simple table with some bottles of unfamiliar white liquor and a few pitiful tails of herrings... At the head of the table sat Reb Shlomo Chaim, an elderly man with bright eyes, full of joy and inner light, inspiring the students with words of Torah and niggunim full of deep emotion, while in the background the muezzin's calls from nearby Lod could be heard."

After this mesmerizing night, joining the yeshiva in Lod was a no-brainer for young Baruch. The young student received a series

of letters with guidance and direction from the Rebbe, especially regarding diligence in Torah study. He studied at the yeshiva in Lod for about a year, which left a strong impression on him and paved a light-filled path for his life journey. After his service in IDFs Nachal brigade, he returned to study at in Lod for another year.

Young Baruch began to use his paintbrush and started painting. The yeshiva administrator, Rabbi Efraim Wolf, didn't know what to do with this 'creature' who had landed in his office and was drawing. Instead of learning, boys were wandering around wanting to see the spectacle, which disrupted the normal routine even more. But the mashpia, Reb Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, told R' Wolf: "He received a special letter from the Rebbe, leave him be."

"Thanks to that, I remained in yeshiva," R' Baruch concluded.

The Mission: "You Will Rectify the Art of Kosher Painting"

In 5722 (1962), Baruch Nachshon married his wife Sarah. The high point for him was, of course, going to meet the Rebbe in person, which happened shortly after his wedding.

"In 5722, I asked to travel to the Rebbe, and I wrote to him about it. The Rebbe didn't see eye to eye with me regarding the trip and preferred that I stay in Eretz Yisrael. However, when the Rebbe saw my intense desire, he agreed to my coming, and wrote to me:

"...Since you requested once and twice to send you an affidavit, I ordered to send you the affidavit, and it is enclosed with a copy, but my opinion is as above, that it's better to use the money and time on site [i.e., in Israel]"

"After the Rebbe invited me, my wife and I worked for an entire year to finance the travel expenses."

After three weeks of sailing on a Greek ship, the young couple arrived at the Rebbe's court.



The Rebbe during a rare visit to an art exhibition of Baruch Nachshon

“My first Yechidus with the Rebbe took place two days after our arrival. This audience lasted more than three and a half hours. I laid out my entire long and tumultuous life journey before the Rebbe. In the Rebbe’s holy room, I felt that everything was open. I felt I was speaking with a man of truth and could tell him the whole truth.

“During that Yechidus, the Rebbe assigned me the mission - which the Rebbe himself testified had not been done since the creation of the world - to rectify the kashrus of painting. ‘Many generations have passed, and the art of kosher painting has not been rectified, and you will rectify this,’ the Rebbe told me. From that moment, I felt an enormous weight on my shoulders and tremendous responsibility. The Rebbe even told me he would give me a one-year scholarship to study art, in addition

to funding for rent and living expenses, all at the Rebbe’s expense.”

From Hobby to Vocation: The Rebbe Sent a Weekly Check

It was a respectable art exhibition held at Beit HaTanach in Tel Aviv, to which all the ‘who’s who’ of the Israeli art scene were invited. Yet the artist-host, Baruch Nachshon, arrived at his own art exhibition wearing rubber sandals, a faded beret (“I want to imitate Rembrandt”) and adorned with a long beard. A thin man with the delicate fingers of an artist and a sense of humor mixed with show talent. How typical of him.

Nachshon, an independent person in every way, paints magnificent Jewish paintings deeply rooted in Jewish motifs, some kabbalistic. His stubbornness in refusing to yield to changing fashions cost him dearly, quite literally.



In fact, the life of international Chassidic artist Rabbi Baruch Nachshon is a constant collision course. On the one hand - his works are rare, masterfully crafted, bold, and groundbreaking. All the factors that could have propelled him forward. On the other hand - he despises the artistic establishment and academia that set rigid rules and frameworks, and he pays a price for it: the price of fame (which he despises with all his might) and the price of professional recognition (which he very much desires) and the lack thereof he feels keenly in the volume of his sales. (-From a media report about Nachshon)

The one who helped his professional career lift off was the Rebbe, who even in the first Yechidus discussed his paintings both as art and as business.

“I asked the Rebbe who would guide me, because I didn’t know the language or mentality then,” R’ Baruch recounted in an interview with Beis Moshiach. “The Rebbe told me, ‘There is a Jew in Boro Park named Nissan Davis. He’s a G-d-fearing man and a young architect. He will guide you.’

“After the Yechidus, I received his address from the secretariat. Nissan Davis turned out to be a Hungarian Breslover Chassid, and he’s the one who, by the Rebbe’s command, went with me to various places.

“At one point, I went with him to the artist and sculptor Chaim Gross. At that meeting, he agreed to give me three scholarships at different institutions where he served as an art professor, but the condition was that I had to participate in all the course series, including studies that were not in the spirit of halacha. I thanked him very much for his generosity and

explained that I would do everything to keep the Rebbe’s command to rectify art and make it kosher according to the Shulchan Aruch...

“Fifteen years later, Nissan Davis and I came to him to invite him to an exhibition I was holding in the Lubavitch office building above 770 (the story of which will follow). He was already elderly and not at his best. Nissan showed him an album of my paintings, and he pulled an old memory from his recollection and said that fifteen years earlier, a young Lubavitcher had come to him who he wanted to give several free scholarships to, but he refused to take them because he wanted to keep the command of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

He said at the time that while the Lubavitcher Rebbe understands halacha, Chaim Gross understands art.

“Nissan Davis told him: ‘Here is that young man standing before you’... Chaim Gross looked at me in amazement and at the album of paintings, and he said: ‘Now I see that the Rebbe was right. If you had gone to the academia, you would have been limited and would have had to follow the method of the teacher who taught you, and now you have remained a free, unconstrained person and have reached a level that you could not have reached through any academic study’...”

Throughout his journey, R’ Baruch Nachshon was privileged to receive what few others did: close guidance in the pathways of the art of painting. The Rebbe invested greatly in guiding the ‘sabrá’ who had come from Eretz Yisrael, whose soul aspired to greatness, but didn’t know how to express his inner soaring into action (and dollars).

“In that first Yechidus, I asked the Rebbe what ‘kosher painting’ meant,” Nachshon recounted years later. “And the Rebbe told me to ask rabbonim. I approached Rabbi Dworkin and Rabbi Henkin of ‘Ezras Torah,’ and both instructed me exactly what was permitted and what was forbidden.”

The following entry from R’ Baruch’s diary of the 26th of Tammuz 5724/1964 summarizes the instructions and guidance he received in that Yechidus:

“Since I have been gifted with the talent of painting, I must develop it and particularly strive in fine art and express in my work the inner visions of holiness, thereby rectifying the deficiency that has not been filled as of yet, and to be a G-d-fearing artist, and to practically demonstrate that such is possible even without transgressing the Shulchan Aruch. Over time, I should guide young people in the above. During all our exiles and redemptions, this deficiency was not rectified, and in the final Redemption all of these will be rectified, and this is my task.

“Regarding parnassa: I should find a livelihood connected with art, specifically commercial art. The income from it is substantial. I should look into studying the profession in the most expedient way. I should not waste time studying history or English and American literature, and instead focus on learning the profession itself.”

For two years, R’ Baruch Nachshon and his wife Sarah stayed in the United States, with the Rebbe personally taking care of all their needs, so that R’ Baruch could advance and finetune in the art of painting. Every week, the Rebbe sent them a check for their livelihood... R’ Baruch also recounted how before Pesach an unknown woman drove up to their home with a carload of foodstuff for Yom Tov. She said the Rebbe sent her...

The Exhibition in 770: A Royal Visit

“Throughout the years, the Rebbe took interest in how my painting was progressing. During these years, I received countless encouragements and blessings regarding painting and the ability to make a living specifically from it. The Rebbe himself interested various people in my paintings and suggested they help me in selling them!... He even sent me to various exhibitions that took place around the world.

“One of these people was Rabbi Feivish Vogel from England, who organized an exhibition for me in London. Afterward, the Rebbe said to continue the exhibition in Paris as well, even though it wasn’t planned. After the London exhibition, I left the paintings in the safekeeping of Rabbi Berel Futerfas in London, and the following year I told myself it was time to go to the Rebbe and bring the exhibition to the United States.

“The next year, when I came to the Rebbe, I had a Yechidus as usual. While inside, I offered the Rebbe to bring in several original paintings, and then the Rebbe said it would be worthwhile to set up the exhibition in the office building adjacent to 770 and make it open to

the public. With a wide smile he added, 'I will be the opener'...

"The Rebbe indeed came to my exhibition, and for forty-five minutes (an astronomical amount of time in the Rebbe's terms!) moved around from painting to painting, sharing his comments on the paintings I displayed there.

"The Rebbe stopped by the painting showing a white donkey with the Rebbe sitting on it, with a kind of crown on his head and a lit candle with the verse '*Menachem mashmi'a shalom*' (the initials of MM"SS, the Rebbe's name). The Rebbe stood by the painting and made a dismissive gesture with his hand and smiled very broadly. To me it was already clear that the Rebbe is the Melech HaMoshiach, and that's how I painted the Rebbe.

"During the exhibition, the Rebbe asked me various questions, and among other things asked if there were dancing Chassidim in my paintings? I told the Rebbe I hadn't painted any, because until then I had been painting according to my emotional state... Indeed, since then I make sure to include dancing Chassidim; for example, there is a painting where the Rebbe holds dancing Chassidim with both of his holy hands... or a picture where the Rebbe comes to Chevron with dozens of dancing Chassidim in the background. And so many now identify my paintings with the dancing Chassidim.

"In one of the paintings in the exhibition, a righteous person and a wicked person were depicted, with the wicked person above and the righteous below. The Rebbe remarked that the righteous person should always be above. Indeed, after the exhibition the painting was corrected and the righteous person was 'upgraded' to the top, as I added a Jew with tzitzis above the wicked person.

"At the end of the exhibition, the Rebbe asked me to disseminate the paintings through all means and throughout the world."

The Rebbe's Guidance on Art

"Once, during a private audience, the Rebbe asked me if I had painted while I was here. I replied to the Rebbe that I hadn't painted because I was in a dark mood. The Rebbe told me that an artist who doesn't paint falls into melancholy, and instructed me to paint wherever I travel. Since then, I make sure to paint wherever I go.

"The following incident happened about a year after the exhibition, when I had come to the Rebbe for the Yamim Noraim. As I was passing by during the lekach distribution, the Rebbe asked me to visit Mr. Chaim Potok, who was a Conservative rabbi and well-known author in the United States. During this lekach distribution, it was rare to receive such an assignment...

"I traveled to Mr. Potok along with Rabbi Avraham Shemtov. As soon as I arrived, he remembered me from when we had met after a lecture he gave at the Van Leer Institute in Yerushalayim. An interesting conversation developed between us as we recalled memories from that meeting. Afterward, he said to me: 'If the Rebbe sent you to me, then I need to give you some advice about your profession. First: do all the public relations for your paintings at this age already. Second: don't do anything without consulting a lawyer. Third: the center of the art world is New York City.'

"For me, the advice he gave was advice that the Rebbe had given me, but it came through him...

"Today, many years after that meeting, it seems to me that if I had listened and implemented his advice more, my situation would have been better in terms of the public relations for my paintings."

"Painting My Rebbe"

When asked about the volume of his artistic output over the years, he responded with characteristic humility and a hint of wistfulness. "It's hard to know," he said, leaning

back in his chair. “Many of the paintings have disappeared; I left them in various places.” He mentioned that a virtual gallery currently [at the time of the interview] being developed contains approximately five hundred of his works, covering diverse subjects, including numerous depictions of the Rebbe.

His portrayals of the Rebbe seem to carry special significance. Nachshon’s eyes lit up when discussing these pieces.

“One of the amazing phenomena I witnessed with the Rebbe was the distribution of dollars for tzedaka,” he explained. He described how thousands of Jews would stand in line to receive a dollar bill from the Rebbe’s hand. “I saw this whole matter as a spiritual one of bringing the Geula closer,” he continued, gesturing animatedly.

This perspective inspired a painting where the Rebbe appears against the backdrop of 770, with tzedaka coins emanating from the building and the Rebbe’s dollars floating on

water. According to Nachshon, the painting contains numerous other details that convey the profound significance of this dollar distribution.

He then described another powerful image: the Rebbe positioned between the Beis HaMikdash above and Shaar Yafo (the Jaffa Gate) below – symbolizing the yearning to see the Rebbe revealed as Moshiach in the rebuilt Yerushalayim.

Perhaps most striking is his description of a third painting showing the Rebbe emerging from a sealed shell while holding a Sefer Torah. When I asked what this represented, Nachshon’s voice softened: “It’s an expression of longing and yearning to see the Rebbe coming out and redeeming Am Yisrael when he is revealed as Melech HaMoshiach.”

The level of detail and devotion in his work became apparent when inquired about the time investment these paintings required. “I remember that in a certain painting of the



Rebbe,” he shared with a thoughtful smile, “I worked just on the eye for six straight hours!”

Impact

When asked about the effect his paintings have had on others, he shared three remarkable stories.

“I was once at an exhibition in Australia,” he began. “A Jewish man came in with his non-Jewish spouse, seeking a painting of the Rebbe. ‘I am Jewish and I want something Jewish to remind me that I am Jewish,’ he told me earnestly.” Nachshon reflected on this moment with gentle insight: “That’s when I understood how important it is to have something Jewish on the walls.”

At that same exhibition, an unexpected reunion occurred. Nachshon noticed a man with an unusually thick mustache in the fashion of the late 1800s and remarked to his wife that he resembled the guards from early Petach Tikvah. To his surprise, this stranger approached him with a smile and produced from his pocket a drawing that Nachshon had given him decades earlier, in 5718 (1958).

“He introduced himself as Captain Chaim Halperin,” Nachshon recounted. “He reminded me that we had met many years before, when I had enthusiastically told him about the Chassidim who had settled in Kfar Chabad.”

The captain’s words to Nachshon were profound: “You think I forgot that conversation? Perhaps you remember King Shlomo’s proverb, ‘Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it.’ Oceans separate us, but Heaven wanted to show you that the result doesn’t always appear in the same place. Since that conversation, I have drawn closer to Yiddishkeit, and today my children study in Lubavitch institutions.”

Reb Baruch shared another equally moving encounter. In 5752 (1992), at an extended stay at the Rebbe’s court, he received an unexpected phone call. “A woman who introduced herself as Chana Cohen told me with great emotion that she had been trying to find me for twenty

years because she wanted to thank me for saving her life.”

She explained that years earlier, she had worked as a secretary for a law firm that specialized in pursuing cases against senators and congressmen in Washington. “Whenever she would call a senator and identify herself as calling from this particular law office, she felt an immense power because the person receiving the call would immediately become flustered,” Nachshon explained. “But she also felt conflicted, being a Jewish woman involved in such work.”

One day, she happened to see one of Nachshon’s posters through a display window in Washington. Impressed, she purchased it and spent hours contemplating it at home. By morning, she had resolved to resign from her position.

“From there, her journey took her to the Jewish neighborhood in Baltimore, then to a Chabad institution in Minneapolis, and eventually to Machon Chana in Crown Heights,” Nachshon continued. “Now she’s a mother to six children who study in a Chabad cheder in the neighborhood.”

With characteristic humility, he added a final note: “I wrote this story to the Rebbe, and later, during a dollars distribution, I received a broad smile from the Rebbe. I felt it was for this story.”

As Nachshon related these accounts, the quiet pride in his voice revealed not vanity about his artistic talent, but genuine joy that his work had become a vessel for positive spiritual transformation in others’ lives.

International Recognition

Decades passed before Rabbi Baruch Nachshon’s paintings began to be published on a global scale and received professional recognition.

“The establishment didn’t recognize him,” says his son Shneur from Chevron. “They didn’t know how to digest his unique Jewish

art. "Even the exhibition at 770 took a lot of emotional energy from him, as there were many people who didn't understand his story. If not for the push from the Rebbe, the endless encouragements - there would have been nothing."

But little by little, the word did get out there. One unique story was the special edition of the Tanya with Nachshon's art adorning it:

"This edition of the Tanya was published by Rehavam Ze'evi HY"D when he served as chairman of the Israel Museum. He asked for the Rebbe's permission to print the Tanya at the museum together with my paintings. The Rebbe referred him to Chabad rabbanim, and they approved it in writing. Indeed, in 5751 (1991), the Tanya was printed at the museum with four of my paintings on its covers along with a warm dedication from Rehavam Ze'evi.

"Two years ago, Professor Hok Ski from Tsukuba University in Japan, an expert in Japanese warfare, approached me and asked me to paint a meditation of the Angel Michael for him... That professor was enthusiastic about the painting and wrote to me, 'It makes a great impression to show what an artist you are, and I hope that in the future you will contribute to the art of religious societies.' I see in this appreciation from a non-Jew an expression of the Rebbe's aspiration for me to rectify the art of painting before Moshiach's revelation."

The Art of Study and Prayer

Above all, R' Baruch Nachshon was a Chassid. Only a few knew this side of him. "At night, when the house was quiet, father would paint. In the early morning, he would study Chassidus, Likutei Torah, Torah Ohr, Tanya, and deep *hemshechim*," recounts his son R' Shneur. "On his shelf are copies of Likutei Torah and Torah Ohr punctuated and vowelized by him, which indicates that he studied these books with great depth. He

studied the book Pelach HaRimon by Reb Hillel of Paritch from cover to cover."

His son Rabbi Yossi Nachshon also describes how "the *hemshechim* of the Rebbe Rashab and the Rebbe Rayatz look well-used... Father could sit all night studying Likutei Torah or *Hemshech Samech Vav* or a sefer of the Abarbanel, and the next day would maintain a normal daily routine, painting what he had learned at night.

He would study deep concepts, and in his mind would 'paint' for himself the ideas he had learned, reducing them to lines and painting them.

"Once he sat with his close friend, the mekubal Rabbi Yitzchok Ginsburgh from Kfar Chabad, and they studied a discourse on the chapter 'The voice of the L-rd is powerful, the voice of the L-rd is majestic, the voice of the L-rd makes the hinds calve,' etc. The next day he painted it according to Kabbalah, in the way he understood it. Some time later, he sent the painting to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe replied, 'I was shocked by the accuracy,' and asked that it not be released publicly. Father wrote back to the Rebbe that it would remain only with him..."

In a newspaper interview that R' Baruch Nachshon gave, he was asked about his paintings that express so much light, beauty, and joy - something that might be "completely opposite to how you feel."

"In my paintings, I retreat inward. The Rebbe taught: 'Come into the ark,' he who wishes to be saved will come into the ark of Torah and prayer, there is the salvation. Once I painted reality as I felt it, and I have very difficult pictures from that period. But then I decided to make a switch, so that we would begin to heal ourselves, 'G-d will wipe away tears from all faces'.

"We need to seek the light, because if we look at what surrounds us, we have nothing to look for here. What strengthens me is that the redemption will come soon, and it will be a redemption of the entire world." ■

**Elozor
Kalman
Tiefenbrun:**

Painting With Mashke

*The first time that the Rebbe blessed him in person about his artwork, was in a yechidus that took place in Kislev 5732 in the course of which he said, **"May you have success in paintings, since you have a special ability to express the Yiddishkeit of a picture."***



After 27 Adar, Reb Elozor Kalman wouldn't accept the Rebbe's gesture of departure, he "converted" the famous picture to one of the Rebbe receiving Pa"nim



Rabbi Elozor Kalman Tiefenbrun was born on 23 Tammuz 5689/1929. He was a descendant of many Gedolei Yisrael, including the saintly Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk. He grew up in England and served as the director of *Chinuch Atzmai* in England.

Reb Elozor Kalman, as he was fondly called by all, was a "Galicianer" from home. He developed a strong bond with the Rebbe, thanks to his communal work which the Rebbe valued immensely.

The connection began in the fifties, when a correspondence ensued between them, with the Rebbe encouraging him in his holy work.

Along with the encouragement, his correspondence with the Rebbe led him to a deep spiritual awakening and he began delving into the teachings of Chassidus. He later established a regular shiur in Tanya, bringing many closer to the way of Chassidus.

Over time, he became one of the pillars of the Chabad community in London where he was known for his warmth and refinement. Despite his success and reputation that he earned for his skills as an artist, his persona was not that of an artist but of a Chassid who was modest, straightforward, and who devoted his life to the Rebbe and the community.

He never systematically studied art. He simply discovered his rare talent for painting as though by chance. But

for a Chassid there is no “chance,” and his talent gave him not only an opportunity but also a responsibility and a shlichus which he navigated wisely with instructions, guidance, and encouragement from the Rebbe, over all the years.

In a letter dated 28 Tammuz 5719, it seems that the connection between him and the Rebbe began long before that. In a letter, the Rebbe notes, “I was happy to read about your work to strengthen and spread Yiddishkeit among your friends.” Then the Rebbe encouraged him and wrote that one can never know what are true “accomplishments” even if sometimes, they might seem “small,” since each small plant will eventually produce fruits, and this is all the more true when it concerns the education of young children.

The Rebbe even encouraged him to look to Rabi Akiva, as specifically those five students that he taught in his later years were the ones who transmitted the traditions of the Torah to the generations that followed, till today.

From the letter, it seems that Reb Elozor Kalman wanted to be more involved in the Chabad activities taking place in “Lubavitch House” in London, and the Rebbe advised him to consult with Anash in order to determine in what areas he would be able to contribute.

“Defending Chassidus Means Defending the Torah”

In the next letter that we find, from 14 Elul 5720, the Rebbe refers to an idea he had raised of opening a mail-order company. What became commonplace years later, to buy things through catalogs and later in “internet stores,” was a radical idea in England at that time. The Rebbe said that this type of business was well developed in the US, but it wasn’t certain that the conservative English would go for the idea. Conservative people prefer buying in stores where they can see and touch the items.

On the other hand, considering the changes that resulted from the war, this approach changed a bit and perhaps there was room

for such a business. The Rebbe told him to consult with knowledgeable friends and do as they decided.

The Rebbe referred to what Reb Elozor Kalman wrote, that he sometimes found himself forced to participate in debates and defend the honor of Chassidus:

“You are in good company and on the right side, since Chassidus is part of the Torah and defending Chassidus means defending the Torah. Whoever adopts a negative approach toward the Chassidic movement seems as though he is living 200 years ago, when Chassidus first appeared and was suspect. However, today, there is no doubt as to the place of Chassidus and all the suspicions of the past have been proven to be baseless. Chassidus is one of the strongest foundations of the Jewish people.”

The Rebbe encouraged him to participate in activities to spread Torah and Chassidus.

Effusive Response

Over the years, Reb Elozor Kalman developed his artistic, G-d given talent. Based on the guidance that he received from the Rebbe, he drew paintings of kedusha. Among his subjects were: the Alter Rebbe, the *Noda B’Yehuda* (Rabbi Yechezkel Landau), Rabbi Akiva Eiger, the Chasam Sofer, the Netziv, Rabbi Chaim Brisker, the Chofetz Chaim, the Imrei Emes of Ger, and many others.

Rabbi Tovia Preschel wrote that Tiefenbrun’s pictures convey more than just the visages of the subjects, but “the ideals and moral excellence, [that] the portrayed personalities represent . . . Looking at his impressive life-size portraits, you feel as if you were in the presence of these great and holy men.”

His creations became well known, and they adorned many Jewish homes as well as various institutions around the world. You can readily identify his works because of their special warmth and lifelike quality. To him, the portraits of Admorim and rabbanim are “alive” and remain alive and are not just nostalgic



depictions of the past. They bring the subject into the house, living room or school where they are found.

Of course, with his involvement in Chassidus, he painted the Rebbe. It was 5727/1967 when he painted the Rebbe standing next to his shtender while wrapped in a tallis and wearing tefillin. In those days, drawing the Rebbe was a major innovation. This is why he asked permission to publicize it, and he sent the request along with a copy of the painting.

Some time later, he received a “*klali-prati*” letter [a letter with a standard text the Rebbe would send to many people, sometimes adding a private line or two – Ed.] with an addition in the Rebbe’s handwriting of “blessing in all matters”. He accepted this as approval for him to continue to publicize the painting.

Not long afterward, the *askan* R’ Avrohom Yitzchok Glick had Yechidus. The Rebbe asked him, “How is Tiefenbrun?” He said, “He is in the middle of a picture of the Rebbe.” The Rebbe asked, “*Farvos macht men mir azoi erenst* — why am I always made to appear so serious? Does he always make me so serious? Perhaps the painting can be retouched?”

R’ Tiefenbrun related what happened next: “After leaving the yechidus, R’ Glick told me what the Rebbe said and I understood that the Rebbe agreed for me to publicize the painting but his serious expression had to be changed. Then and there, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe and noted that I would try to change it according to the Rebbe’s wishes. In all sincerity, I shared my thought that the entire world knows and understands that the matter of a Rebbe is seriousness, especially when he is wearing tallis and tefillin.

“Just a week later, I received an express letter in which the Rebbe said I should alter the painting if it did not entail exertion or monetary outlay, since a Jew’s money is an important thing.

“From this answer too, I understood that I had the Rebbe’s consent. In general, consent to a painting of the Rebbe, back then, was considered a novelty. Following this exchange, I printed up 3000 copies and disseminated them all over the world, especially in Eretz Yisrael. After that, I was particular about painting the Rebbe smiling.”

Another painting of the Rebbe was sent for 11 Nissan 5733. Here too, the Rebbe is shown

in tallis and tefillin. In a return letter (11 Nissan 5733), the Rebbe thanks him for the picture and writes in the margin, "There is what to go on at length about this, but time does not allow. And the main thing is the reaction of the people who see it. Surely he heard directly from them praises and accolades..."

Another time, a copy of a painting was sent to Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. She responded with a thank-you letter (4 Iyar), "It was a pleasure indeed to receive the portrait in color, of my husband ... Your thoughtfulness in sending us the portrait is sincerely appreciated. In addition to the idea itself, the portrait picture is all the more commendable in that it displays both artistic talent and understanding.

"Moreover, it was also a case of 'the right thing at the right time,' for the portrait was received in proximity to my husband's birthday."

"Aggravation" Of A Chassid

Reb Elozor Kalman had a number of private audiences with the Rebbe that had to do with his art. The first time that the Rebbe blessed him in person about his artwork, was in a Yechidus that took place in Kislev 5732 in the course of which he said, "*May you have success in paintings, vibald du kenst aroisbrengen di Yahadus fun a tziur* — since you have a special ability to express the Yiddishkeit [i.e., the Jewish soul] of a picture." After receiving this blessing, he began to engage fully in the work of painting and made a living from it.

He once related an interesting incident that occurred in connection with his paintings, around the time of Shavuos 5732:

"Someone asked about reproducing copies of one of the paintings I made. I went to a meeting in his office to talk to him about it. He worked at a certain organization that raised money for Eretz Yisrael. When I arrived, some of the employees told me that they have complaints against the Rebbe.

"They had organized a dinner on behalf of their organization and since they tried to get

people interested in order to prod them to attend the dinner, they wanted to bring some immigrants from Russia. They contacted some of Anash who had come from Russia to Eretz Yisrael and asked them to be the guests of honor. For some reason, at the last moment, they canceled their participation in the event, which weakened the event. Those who worked at the organization were sure that the reason for their cancellation had to do with instructions the Chassidim had received from the Rebbe. That is why they were upset with the Rebbe.

"When I heard this, I took it to heart and immediately said I was sure this had nothing to do with the Rebbe. Those who knew the Rebbe knew that he would not cause harm to an organization.

"When I went to Crown Heights, I didn't know whether to report this to the Rebbe or not. I figured the Rebbe probably knew about it, yet it was my obligation to inform the Rebbe if someone had complaints against him.

"I wrote a letter and what I had said to the employees. [It should be noted that the letter for Yechidus is not the *tzetel* brought into Yechidus, but the letter written the morning of the Yechidus and submitted to the secretaries. In the evening, when having Yechidus, a short note with names is given to the Rebbe]. To tell you the truth, I didn't want my Yechidus to dwell on this subject, I wanted the Yechidus to be about myself and my family. But I had no choice and therefore, I wrote the letter.

"Several hours later, I passed by 770 and saw Rabbi Binyamin Klein looking for me. He told me that Rabbi Chodakov was urgently looking for me. I went to R' Chodakov's office and he began talking to me while holding a long piece of paper. 'Do you see what it says here?' I immediately identified my handwriting on the paper. He went on, 'The Rebbe was very surprised by what you wrote since he thought the matter was already settled to the satisfaction of that organization. The Rebbe had nothing at all to do with it and he had no

connection with some of Anash canceling their attendance at the dinner?

“R’ Chodakov concluded, ‘We know where these rumors come from; from those who have no love for Lubavitch.’

“I said to R’ Chodakov that I would do whatever I could to convey this information that I had just received. I went to the secretaries’ office and called the person who spoke to me about the matter and had complaints against the Rebbe. I repeated to him what R’ Chodakov told me and asked him to convey this information to those with complaints. He said he would.

“That night, I had yechidus and the Rebbe spoke to me about this and said, ‘and this that you had aggravation from being a Lubavitcher ...’ I reacted in surprise, ‘I had aggravation? It’s my pleasure to be a Lubavitcher!’

Hearing that, the Rebbe smiled broadly and said, “if having aggravation was decreed, then let this be the aggravation ...”

• • •

There is another interesting expression from the Rebbe that he heard in that Yechidus. Together with him in the room was his daughter Mrs. Ronya (Fajnländ), today a shlucha in Long Beach, California. First, the Rebbe blessed him, “Your success should be such that it should be good for you and good for those who receive the paintings.”

After they spoke about the aggravation in the story mentioned before, the Rebbe said to his daughter (in English), “The same thing goes for you. If you see someone who is not so enthusiastic about Lubavitch, you don’t need to feel worried, because the greater the qualities and the more holiness, the more opposition there is.”

Alcoholic Paint

On every motzoei Yom Tov, the Rebbe would give out wine from his *havdala* cup to all those in attendance (known as *kos shel*

bracha). Additionally, he would often give his emissaries a bottle of *masheke* to be given out at farbrengens upon their return to their hometowns.

On the concluding night of Simchas Torah 5739 (1978), R’ Tiefenbrun passed by the Rebbe to receive *kos shel bracha*. In addition to the usual pour of wine, the Rebbe handed him a bottle of vodka and said (in English): **“See to mix it into your paint.”**

As Pesach approached, Reb Elozor Kalman approached Dayan Padwa, a respected local rabbi, and inquired what should be done with the leaven-based alcohol. The rabbi advised him to mix the remainder of the alcohol completely into the paint so that it would be rendered inedible even for the consumption of a dog (as stipulated by halacha). This would allow the alcohol to be kept over Pesach without being sold to a non-Jew.

Following the holiday, Reb Elozor Kalman wrote to the Rebbe that he was still in possession of the alcohol, without specifying what exactly he had done to it. Actually, the wording of the letter seemed to imply that it was sold together with the rest of the *chametz*.

The Rebbe replied that this should not be done again (i.e., the Rebbe’s alcohol should not be sold to a non-Jew).

Reb Elozor Kalman wrote back, explaining that he had not sold the alcohol but had mixed it into the paint so that it would be inedible. He added that if the Rebbe so wishes, he will stop using it and throw it out.

The Rebbe replied by underlining the words “using it” in Rabbi Tiefenbrun’s letter and added: **“As is obvious** [meaning that he should indeed continue using the paint], **so that it will lead to a positive use and not be destroyed, G-d forbid.”**

Painting the Royals?

In a Yechidus he had around Shavuot 5735/1975, he asked the Rebbe about the possibility of expanding the range of the



paints while standing, because this makes it easier for him to see what he's painting even at a distance.

The Rebbe said, smiling: "Michelangelo would draw frescoes on the ceiling while lying on his back."

Reading His Thoughts

In a Yechidus in Tishrei 5739, the Rebbe greeted him with a big smile, "Shalom aleichem to all. May Hashem give all of you a good, sweet year, those who are here and those who remained in England. Hashem should accept all the prayers." Then he added, "You don't write anything about the paintings." Reb Elozor Kalman said, "I didn't want to lengthen the time of the Yechidus for that subject." The

Rebbe asked, "Nu, but *b'poel*?"

He replied that he brought four paintings with him that he made for the purpose of trying to sell them in New York. The Rebbe asked about each detail like a concerned, loving father and said, "You brought four paintings?! Did you sell them all yet?"

"No," said R' Tiefenbrun, "but I already spoke to people about it."

The Rebbe blessed him with tremendous blessings, "If parnassa needs to come through painting, it should be an expansive parnassa, You, together with your wife, should raise all the children to Torah, chuppa and good deeds." Reb Elozor Kalman said that he wanted to thank the Rebbe for everything he did for him until that point and the Rebbe concluded the Yechidus with, "Me, there is no need to thank. You need to thank Hashem."

R' Tiefenbrun once recounted a story of open *ruach ha'kodesh*, when the Rebbe clearly read his thoughts and responded to what he had been thinking:

subjects of his paintings, perhaps even including the royal family of Britain.

Here is a transcript of that Yechidus:

R' Tiefenbrun: People have suggested that I paint pictures of well-known, important personalities and the like, as it will attract wider interest.

The Rebbe: I wouldn't want you to divert the energy you are able to invest in the Jewish pictures. According to Shulchan Aruch [the Code of Jewish Law], I don't see why not, *kol zman es is nisht hepech fun tznies* — as long as it is not immodest.

R' Tiefenbrun: G-d forbid!

The Rebbe: Nevertheless, nowadays even non-Jews are interested in [art pertaining to] Jewish subjects.

An Artist's Posture

At one point, R' Tiefenbrun suffered from back problems resulting from a slipped disk. Noticing this, the Rebbe asked him if he paints while sitting or standing. He replied that he

“After I painted the portrait of the Rebbe’s father, Reb Levi Yitzchok, I sent a copy of the original with someone who was traveling to New York to bring to the Rebbe. I went for a visit to the Rebbe some time later, and I thought that when I would pass the Rebbe at ‘dollars,’ if the Rebbe mentioned the picture at all I would tell the Rebbe that I would be happy to bring him the original painting.

“When I passed by on Sunday at dollars, the Rebbe gave me a dollar for ‘bracha v’hatzlacha’ and did not say anything else to me. After I continued on, the Rebbe suddenly called me back and said, ‘**You don’t need to give me the pictures. You must sell them!**’ He then gave me an additional dollar ‘for the pictures.’”

“I Already Said Shalom Aleichem to You”

R’ Tiefenbrun recounted:

“At the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen in 5732/1971, the Rebbe spoke about the Jews still ‘behind the Iron Curtain’ and asked that niggunim in Russian be sung. During the niggunim, the Rebbe gave out *mashke* to be distributed in various countries.

“The Rebbe then looked in my direction, and people around me said that it seems the Rebbe wants me to come up too.

“When I approached the bima, the Rebbe asked: ‘Are you a Jew from Russia?’

“I said: ‘No, I’m Tiefenbrun from London.’

“The Rebbe gave me *mashke* and instructed me to distribute it among the people present at the farbrengen.

“During those moments, I felt rather muddled that the Rebbe did not recognize me and was concerned that perhaps the Rebbe had ‘confused’ me with someone else because of the beard that I began to let grow at that time. I knew that the Rebbe knew about it, as Rabbi Gluck told the Rebbe about it at the end of the past Tishrei.

“Later, when I went in for Yechidus, I decided to ask the Rebbe about it.

“Immediately upon entering for yechidus, the Rebbe said to me, ‘Shalom aleichem’ with a big smile, and added, ‘I already gave you a shalom aleichem.’

“In the note that I handed to the Rebbe, there was only one thing written, that I wanted to know what happened yesterday at the farbrengen because I’m ‘unhappy’ and was very much pained over what happened with the *mashke* the previous night at the farbrengen. I signed off the note with requests for blessings.

“The Rebbe took the note from my hand, and even *before he opened it*, he said: ‘This that I did not recognize you, it says ‘and Yosef recognized his brothers and they did not recognize him,’ and Rashi explains, ‘that he left them without a beard and now they encountered him with a beard.’

“The Rebbe went on to say: ‘When you came the first time you did not have a beard and now you have a beard.’

“Only after that did the Rebbe open the note, and respond with a smile about what was written in the note: ‘I answered this already... And what you write that you are unhappy, you need to be happy.’”

The Rebbe then inquired about what his wife has to say about his growing a beard. When Reb Elozor Kalman responded that she is in agreement with him on all matters pertaining to Yiddishkeit, the Rebbe responded with a huge smile.

• • •

Reb Elozor Kalman Tiefenbrun passed away on the 15th of Shevat 5778, and is survived by his children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren proudly going in the way of Torah and Chassidus.

“*Hakitzu v’ranenu shochnei afar,*” him included, immediately and now! ■

**Calligraphist
Michel Schwartz:**

The Rebbe's Cartoonist and Logo Designer

*Logos of Chabad organizations that Michel
designed, the Kos Shel Eliyahu the Rebbe
requested and kept in his holy room*





Illustration, in the Rebbe's view, was a key factor in translating to children the visual essence of the written word. Through pictures which would accompany the text, children would more easily relate to the information that the text was presenting."

Michel Schwartz was born in 5686 (1926) in the Catskill Mountains of New York to a religious Jewish family. In his youth, he studied at the "Toras Chaim" Yeshiva in Brooklyn and at the RJJ Yeshiva in Manhattan.

From his early childhood, his artistic talents were evident and continued to develop over the years. At the age of 13, after promising to continue his Torah studies in parallel, he enrolled in the New York Institute of Art and Design. Since then, he has been a prolific creator, with his artwork appearing in the President's Residence in Israel, the Knesset, and Yerushalayim City Hall, as well as in the White House and prestigious collections around the world.

First Connection with the Rebbe

About two years after beginning his art studies, the connection between him and the Rebbe was established when Michel was only 15 years old. He would visit the Rebbe twice a month at his office in 770 to receive guidance on illustrating the "Talks and Tales," the monthly children's magazine that the Rebbe had established and other publications of the Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch.

As Schwartz himself recalled in an article he wrote for a journal published by Tzivos Hashem, an organization he very much cherished: *"I was quite excited at the prospect of such direct face-to-face communication with this great teacher, the son-in-law of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn.*

"Rabbi Nissan Mindel ushered me into the office of Rabbi Schneerson, who was

standing at his voluminous bookcase reading, deep in thought. We stood there, until he partially turned to me, smiling, and motioned with his right hand for me to have a seat.

"I will never forget this awesome scene, his sparkling blue eyes and welcome smile... without uttering a word. I'm sure I was too young to appreciate the significance of the moment, that I was being invited, by the man who was later to become the greatest of all Rebbes, to execute under his tutelage, some of the earliest pictorial interpretations of Judaism for Lubavitch children's books."

At that time, the Rebbe headed Lubavitch's publishing division, and under his dynamic guidance, the "Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch" became the largest publisher of books and journals intended for Jews worldwide.

One day, the Rebbe requested adding a new section to the magazine—an illustrated page with five or six little-known facts about Jewish customs and wisdom. The Rebbe wanted this section to become something special that children would look forward to each month. The section was named "Curiosity Corner" and was to appear in the "Talks and Tales" and its Yiddish-language brother, "Shmuesen mit Kinder."

Initially, young Schwartz worked with the Rebbe's secretary, Dr. Nissan Mindel, who was appointed to implement various ideas from the Rebbe. Shortly after beginning his work, Rabbi Mindel said to him, *"Look, why should I be the go-between person, getting the information from Rabbi Schneerson, conveying it to you, then after you draft the necessary sketches based on this information, I bring it in to Rabbi Schneerson for critical commentary, then deliver his comments and corrections to you, to produce the finished artwork and associated copy? It makes more sense to introduce you to Rabbi Schneerson and let you deal directly with him."* And so it was.

The Rebbe's Artistic Direction

Schwartz explained that *"Illustration, in the Rebbe's view, was a key factor in translating to*

children the visual essence of the written word. Through pictures which would accompany the text, children would more easily relate to the information that the text was presenting."

"He was firmly in favor of producing this work in Yiddish and English. However, since the texts would be different from each other, they would require separate illustrations. As I understood it, the Rebbe felt that even if a child could not read Yiddish, he or she would ask parents or teachers to read and explain what the pictures were about."

What surprised the young artist was the Rebbe's familiarity with contemporary media: *"When describing the feature, the Rebbe said, 'It should look like Ripley, — Es zol oys'zehn vee Ripley.' I was taken by surprise."*

"For many years, in many newspapers throughout the country, a square measuring approximately 5"x 5", contained the work of Robert Ripley, titled 'Believe It Or Not.' Here was this venerable Rabbi aware of a column, which appeared daily in 'The New York Mirror,' now a defunct Hearst publication, asking me to make our feature in Ripley's style."

"On another occasion, the Rebbe asked me to create a true to life character about whom adventure stories could be written. This time he suggested that the format and look should be 'like Dick Tracy!'"

Schwartz details his creative process with the Rebbe: *"Each segment was first discussed with the Rebbe - he had definite input - after which I would write the script, box by box, and prepare pencil sketches of the scenes with balloons for the text. The Rebbe would review each scene or representation, and only after I had his corrections and approval, did I do the finished art, which then went to printer."*

It can be said that from then on, throughout the years, Mr. Schwartz received close guidance from the Rebbe in all professional aspects of the drawings and illustrations he produced.



"When Moshiach Comes" (requested by the Rebbe) made up of hundreds of thousand of letters from Tanach, Chazal and the Rebbeim about Yemos HaMoshiach

The Merkos Logo and the True Shape of the Luchos

In 5704 (1944), Schwartz was asked to design an emblem for the Rebbe's publishing division, "Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch." As he explains: "I submitted a sketch which showed the world globe in 2 halves super-imposed by the Luchos. The copy around the perimeter of the design was hand-lettered in Hebrew and English, in modern face, which the Rebbe always preferred. The overall design itself was, for those days, considered Avant-garde, as most all seals for Jewish and other institutions were ornately designed in French and Old English thematics. The Rebbe always supported modern trends in design and publication, similar to the more advanced publishers of the times."

When he submitted the new logo to the Rebbe, "his comment was favorable as to the shape and design. In general, however, he said

that the Luchos, the Tablets, were not to be drawn with half-round cupolas at the top of each tablet. The correct design was to draw two vertical rectangles, with a ratio of 1 to 1½, flat at the top as well as the base."

The Rebbe then provided a historical lesson: "The familiar rounded top was introduced by Roman order, derived from their architectural style, prevalent at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. The Roman desire to eradicate everything Jewish, included even the shapes of our most holy symbols."

Schwartz took this lesson to heart: "From that day on, I never again drew the 'Ten Commandments' with the 'Roman' shape at their top. How I always wished that Jewish artists and architects of synagogues and temples would realize that the perpetuation of a mistake is unacceptable, no matter how long the error has been practiced."

The Map of the Yetzias Mitzrayim

The following tale shows the Rebbe's deep involvement in Michel's illustration work:

In the summer of 5754 (1994), Schwartz received a phone call from a rabbi who was preparing a book about the Exodus from Egypt. The rabbi had encountered a map drawn by Schwartz showing the Bnei Yisrael's route going north along the coastline to Ashkelon, then east to the Holy Land - contrary to other scholarly sources.

"I remembered doing a number of maps and charts for the Rebbe. The Exodus route was in one of them," Schwartz recalled. When the rabbi asked about the discrepancy with other sources, Schwartz could only reply: "Look, you may have a problem, and I can appreciate your predicament. The Exodus chart was one of the earliest experiences I had with the Rebbe, and in those days, I did what the Rebbe instructed me to do. I'm no authority on the Exodus. I'm sorry I can't be of more help."

The special gravity, along with great friendliness, the Rebbe gave to Mr. Schwartz and his drawings can be seen from the fact that when he opened an art gallery in Crown Heights called "Chai Gallery," the Rebbe gave him a check for \$10,000 to help with expenses and instructed that the gallery should serve as an art education center as well.

The Tzivos Hashem Logo

During Sukkos of 5741 (1980), the Rebbe established "Tzivos Hashem" as a spiritual army which school-age boys and girls would join. The Rebbe detailed his vision: tens of thousands of Jewish children around the world would join as soldiers in "Tzivos Hashem" and advance in ranks from private to general through fulfilling mitzvos. The army needed an emblem.

Schwartz vividly recalls how this project came to him: *"Go see Schwartz," the Rebbe said. "He will make it for you."*

"Now, this was Saturday evening. At about ten o'clock, I heard the front door chime announcing the arrival of two of my Lubavitch friends, Rabbi Yossi Raichik and Rabbi Mendel Kotlarsky."

"After describing the details of what the Rebbe had discussed earlier that day, they informed me that the Rebbe was waiting for their return to see a sketch of the emblem, so that they could go to press on Sunday with flyers, brochures, patches and stickers to launch Tzivos Hashem."

"I listened in total amazement. I was being asked to put aside whatever I might have been working on to 'help get the ball rolling.' I realized that these wonderful young men were serious, and had no reservations about how I would create a 'military' motif. They were sure that the Rebbe would approve. He was awaiting them to come back."

Without hesitation, Schwartz began drawing a fortress-style emblem with five turrets that included the initials 'Tzaddik' and 'Hei,' for Tzivos Hashem. The letters were separated by a diagonal, with each letter having a separate background. The background of the letter 'Tzadik' was blue with stars and a moon symbolizing night, while the 'Hei' had a red sun on a yellow field, symbolizing day.

His messengers took the rough sketch to the Rebbe, and returned at about 1 AM with the Rebbe's comments:

"1. Generally he was pleased with shape, the lettering and the format. 2. He said that Michel should remove the moon & stars from the 'tzaddik' background, as this was idol worship. Solid blue would do. 3. The sun with its red rays behind the 'hey' recalled the flag of Japan. Solid red would do very well."

Schwartz recalls: *"I revised the rough sketch as the Rebbe suggested, and saw that once again, he was absolutely right. It really looked better, and would be more easily reproduced, even in very small sizes."*

Shortly after, the motto of Tzivos Hashem, "We Want Moshiach Now," was added to the logo with the Rebbe's approval.

“Today the Tzivos Hashem emblem is the single most reproduced Jewish organizational symbol in history. Estimates run into the hundreds of millions over the years,” notes Schwartz. *“When I consider the strides and accomplishments of this organization, my heart swells with pride, and I feel honored that I was called upon to become involved when the Rebbe first initiated his new idea of Tzivos Hashem.”*

In 5749 (1989), additional symbols were designed for the various ranks of the soldiers in Tzivos Hashem. These were also submitted to the Rebbe for his approval. One of the designs containing the Luchos did not receive the Rebbe’s approval. He wrote that the Luchos represent all ranks in Tzivos Hashem and cannot be limited to just one rank.

The Shechina in His Eyes

Over the years, several friends suggested that he paint the Rebbe. Michel Schwartz avoided this for many years. “I knew that if I made a painting of the Rebbe, it had to be

something special—not just another painting,” he explained. Only after years did he develop the decision to paint the Rebbe’s visage out of letters.

One of his Chabad friends, Rabbi Yossi Raichik, suggested that he paint the Rebbe using letters from the Rebbe’s inaugural “Basi LeGani” discourse that was delivered in 5751 (1951) at the *kabbolas ha’nesius*.

The complex and careful work continued for a long time. “This work I will never forget,” he related. “During the work I reached a point where the work was finished, but this is actually work that is never completed... one can always improve, add, or subtract.”

The drawing is composed of a huge number of tiny dots. Initially, he made the background and on it the drawing of the face itself. When writing the text that composes the face on the background, he did not plan which word would fall on which part of the face.

“To my great surprise, I noticed in retrospect that both eyes fell exactly on the word

Michel Schwartz presenting the Rebbe a special “Kos shel Eliyahu”



‘Shechina’ which appears several times in ‘Basi LeGani’... only then did I decide that the painting was complete.”

Mr. Schwartz took the painting to Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht’s office to show him, and even showed him the “*mofes*” with the two eyes. Rabbi Hecht responded with great seriousness: “This is not by chance. This is Divine Providence, *‘beim Rebbe’n ruht doch di Shechina oif zein kop’*.” The Divine Presence rests on the Rebbe’s head...

“Make a Picture of How Moshiach Comes”

The crowning glory of Schwartz’s artistic works was in the painting “When Moshiach Comes” which the Rebbe requested him to prepare. The painting he was asked to prepare depicts the Messianic era with all its events.

Schwartz describes how this historic commission came about: “...And now, Michel, I want you to make another picture.... of what the world will look like when Moshiach will come!”

“This historic ‘commission’ was put to me in these simple words, spoken in Yiddish, at ‘Sunday dollars,’ on September 24th, 1989.

“I stood there speechless, completely taken by surprise; but without hesitation, I accepted this most unexpected and historically unprecedented request.

“During my 45 years of working with the Rebbe, I could not recall that he ever requested anything like this from anyone. There was absolutely no elaboration on his part. It was truly out of the ordinary.

“I doubt if there has ever been a similar request to any artist in Jewish history, put forth by any other Rebbe or religious leader of stature.”

Not knowing how to proceed, Schwartz consulted with Rabbi Groner and Rabbi Hecht, but neither could provide specific guidance. Finally, after months of contemplation, he developed his concept:

“I immediately visualized a picture like the portrait had been, on a much larger scale. One which would contain as many references as can be found in the Torah, Prophets, the Writings, the Mishna, Talmud and Sages, all the prophecies about the coming of Moshiach.

“I would confine the painting to 304,805 letters, which is the exact number of letters in the Torah. It would be very large in proportion. I envisioned the canvas approximately 6 feet by 4½ feet. The letters would be half an inch in height. Superimposed on this canvas of letters would be many illustrations pertaining to the prophecies of the great scholars, authors and teachers of our people through the centuries.”

When Schwartz presented his concept to the Rebbe, the Rebbe immediately responded: *“But it should be made of many, many letters, so you can earn from it a lot of money, so you can give a lot of tzedaka!”*

Rabbi Groner, in amazement, exclaimed: *“Michel, that’s just what you said! That’s just what you said!”*

Schwartz then told the Rebbe, “The picture will contain 304,805 letters.”

The Rebbe immediately replied, “That is exactly how many letters there are in the Torah!”

On 25 Iyar 5750 (1990), Mr. Schwartz’s brother, Moshe, came to the Rebbe and said that he needed texts from the Rebbeim about the days of redemption to incorporate into the painting, but he did not know where to look for these texts:

This is how the conversation went:

Rebbe: May there be good tidings [gave a dollar in his hand]: This is for the new picture he is going to make.

Moshe Schwartz: I need I need sources from the Rebbeim about what is going to happen regarding Moshiach and redemption. I don’t know who to turn to.

Rebbe: It’s been printed. And there is an index of topics.

Moshe Schwartz: In the index of discourses?

Rebbe: From the discourses of the ‘Tzemach Tzedek,’ there is an alphabetical listing. There you can find everything. Ask to borrow from the library, search under ‘Yemos HaMoshiach’ and ‘Moshiach,’ and you’ll see what is written there.

About half a year later, at the dollars on Sunday, 4 Tishrei 5751 (1990), Michel Schwartz came again to the Rebbe and presented the first part of his work that he had already begun.

The conversation went thus:

Rebbe: Schwartz, shalom aleichem!

Schwartz: A year ago you requested that I make the picture of Isaiah’s prophecy; I’ve brought it now so you can see what has been done. It doesn’t look like much, but there are already forty-four thousand letters here, and it will be three hundred and four thousand eight hundred and five letters.

Rebbe: That’s the number of letters as a complete Sefer Torah.

Schwartz: All the text appearing here is about Moshiach, from Yeshaya to the Rambam and to the Rebbeim. All of them. There will be three hundred and four thousand letters. It begins with Yeshaya’s vision and continues on and on.

Rebbe: But don’t delay too long, because Moshiach will come.

Schwartz: Okay. But this is just the background. Afterward, there will be the entire picture of what is written here; I’ll draw on top of it.

Rebbe: Good tidings, much success.

Professor Yirmiyahu Branover who was present, turned to the artist: Michel, note that in the drawing you’ll also depict how Russian Jews leave Russia.

Rebbe: That’s included too?

Schwartz: It will be in the picture.

Rebbe: Great success, may there be a double portion. Good tidings.

The Rebbe continued to urge Schwartz to complete the painting quickly. At a dollar

distribution event on 21 Shevat 5752 (1992), Schwartz arrived with most of the painting completed:

Rebbe: Mr. Schwartz. Yes.

Schwartz: It’s already ready.

Rebbe: With all the letters.

Schwartz: Four hundred thousand letters. And the only thing left is the last one, your text that you wrote about techiyas hameisim. It will be under the words “מכלכל חיים - sustains life” and each of them is like this. [There is text here from] all the Rebbeim, from the Baal Shem Tov until you. I have all the Rambam, everything is already ready, on this I am now doing in color, color through which one can see how the world will look when Moshiach comes.

Rebbe: But make sure not to delay it much until Moshiach comes, may it be in a auspicious hour. Much success.

Schwartz: There is a special line here for each tzaddik. And it will be ready by Erev Pesach.

Rebbe: Perhaps by the 11th?

Schwartz: 11th Nissan, it will be.

Rebbe: May it be in a good hour, this [gives him a dollar] is for expediting.

Schwartz: The next time you see it, it will be ready with a frame and everything. You said a siyum needs to be made.

Rebbe: Yes.

Schwartz: We will make a siyum.

Rebbe: In an auspicious hour with much success. Thank you very much.

Despite the Rebbe’s constant urging, Schwartz did not complete the painting by 11 Nissan of that year, as it was shortly after the Rebbe’s health event.

The completion ceremony—a ceremony that the Rebbe had requested to hold—was held with great public fanfare in combination with a *Kabbolas HaMalchus* satellite event on 10 Shevat 5753 (1993), in the presence of the Rebbe and thousands of Chassidim and media outlets from around the world.

A few moments after thousands of Chassidim at the live ‘satellite’ event from around the world shouted and sang from the depths of their hearts “*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V’Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach Lolam Va’ed*,” Mr. Schwartz completed his painting depicting all the events to happen “When Moshiach Comes”, as he called the artwork.

Reflecting on the enormous undertaking, Schwartz shared: “*All in all, it took more than 2500 hours of work ... In the end, the painting was not 304,805 letters, as I had envisioned, but 387,000 letters.*”

“For over a year, the picture was on display at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue. Privately, I always wanted it to be exhibited in a museum or some place where multitudes of people could view it and understand the meaning of the Rebbe’s desire for the arrival of Moshiach.”

It was a new peak in the artistic world of Mr. Schwartz—the days of Moshiach had been captured through his divinely-inspired artistry.

The Kos Shel Eliyahu

Among Schwartz’s notable works is the Cup of Elijah, which has a special story. While in Yerushalayim, he designed a unique cup made of pure silver with gold overlays, decorated

with the song “Eliyahu HaNavi” that is sung by many communities on motzoei Shabbos.

When his brother Moshe showed the cup to the Rebbe during a Sunday dollars distribution, something unprecedented occurred:

“The Rebbe studied the cup deeply as Moshe described its content and design. Then the Rebbe said, ‘Nu, is Michel already in production?’

“To which Moshe responded, ‘No, not yet. However, this is the prototype and the only one in existence at present.’

“The Rebbe studied the cup again, and asked, ‘Nu, if this is the only one, will it be left for me?’”

Schwartz was astonished: “*The Rebbe here broke all protocol. As far as anyone could recall, including those who had served the Rebbe since the first day, for more than 35 years, the Rebbe had never in the past asked for a gift.*”

L a t e r , arrangements were made to present the cup

to the Rebbe as a gift for his 86th birthday, made possible through the generosity of Belle and Jack Rosenbaum.

What touched Schwartz deeply was learning years later that the cup had been kept in the Rebbe’s personal quarters: “*The cup you gave the Rebbe, since the Rebbe became ill, it has been standing on a small round table at his bedside day and night. It is never removed for*



any reason,” an attendant told him.

Rabbi Groner clarified: “No, Michel. Not since he became sick. Your cup had been in his room since the day you presented it to him, for over 4 years.”

He added that the cup rested on a wooden table personally made by the Rebbe Maharash, alongside walking sticks that had belonged to Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev and the Rebbe Rashab.

A Lifelong Connection

Throughout his life, Michel Schwartz enjoyed a special relationship with the Rebbe, who recognized and nurtured his artistic talents and directed them toward sacred purposes.

Through illustrations for children, organizational logos, maps, ceremonial objects, and monumental paintings, Schwartz became the Rebbe’s artist—translating the Rebbe’s vision into visual form and helping prepare the world for the Messianic era.

“I always knew that the Rebbe supported and encouraged artistic achievement,” Schwartz reflects, *“and on a number of occasions, he*



Unveiling the picture “When Moshiach Comes” at the Kabbolas HaMalchus event on Yud Shevat 5753

expressed his feeling that the gift of artistic talent is on the highest level.”

The Rebbe’s guidance transformed not only Schwartz’s art but the spiritual dimension of Jewish art itself, demonstrating how creativity could serve as a powerful vehicle for transmitting Jewish values and hastening the ultimate Geulah. ■

Michael Muchnik:

Mosaics for Moshiach

“

There were buildings of chesed organizations and I drew them on the left side. The shul was on the right. The Rebbe pointed out that based on what is explained in Chassidus and Kabbalah, it should be the other way around. Tefilla, which mostly corresponds to gevura, should be on the left, and those things associated with chesed should be on the right.”





It was 5741 when the Chassidic artist, R' Michoel Muchnik, went to South Africa for an art exhibit. He experienced problems with his visa there. When he asked for the Rebbe's bracha, the Rebbe told him to extend his stay there, remaining two weeks longer than planned. Maximizing his time there, he arranged additional exhibits in nearby towns.

One of the exhibits took place in Cape Town, by the shliach R' Mendel Popack. Along with the exhibit he planned a special gathering for his community.

In Cape Town there lived a wealthy man that the shliach knew, but for some reason he had been unable to be mekarev him to Chabad. The shliach, who knew that this man loved art, invited him to emcee the event. This was the first time that the man agreed to enter the Chabad House. The event was successful and the wealthy man got involved and began taking an interest in Chabad.

"Eighteen years later," says R' Michoel, "I went to visit my daughter who was in seminary in South Africa and I met the chairman of the board of the Chabad House; it was that wealthy man who did not want to hear about Chabad."

The Yechidus Which Shaped the Young Artist's Life

At his first Yechidus, the Rebbe saw a great future for the Lubavitcher artist and took a great interest in his paintings. At this time, Michoel had

finished learning in yeshiva and decided that the time had come to go back to that which he thought he had been created for, art. He did not want to do this without getting the Rebbe's approval. Michoel was only twenty-one when he had his first yechidus. He brought some of his artwork with him. The Rebbe took an interest in various details and even told Michoel to start publicizing his art in and beyond the Jewish world.

During the Yechidus the Rebbe, surprisingly, asked that he leave the paintings with him. Michoel of course agreed. The Rebbe asked, "Are these original paintings?" When he said yes, the Rebbe said he could not take the originals but asked him to photograph them and send them through the secretaries. From this incident, Michoel understood how much the Rebbe cared about the work of artists and took it as a green light to continue. He went back to his studio, put on his smock, and with paintbrush in hand began to paint. That first Yechidus, which shaped his life, was eight minutes long.

Chassidus as a Source of Artistic Inspiration

Michoel Muchnik was born in 5712 in Philadelphia to a Conservative family. He would attend Hebrew School now and then where he got a little Judaism.

At bar mitzva age, and even before that, he began painting, not in a professional capacity but as a hobby. The hobby made significant progress when he turned seventeen, when he began getting more involved in the world of art. To his disappointment, after several years he did not find his place in the art world and wasn't all that pleased with his creations.

"In general," says Michoel, "to succeed in the world as an artist is quite a challenge. In every branch of art, in order to be successful, you need to put in a lot of work and be extremely dedicated and mainly, you need *siyata d'shmaya*."

Because of this and other reasons, Michoel decided to put down his paintbrush. He began searching to try and find the right place for himself. Knowing that he was a Jew, he began looking in this direction. He became interested in Judaism in general and Chabad Chassidus in particular, with the help of his friend, R' Meir Abehsera a"h (the Rebbe's "whistler"), who was also searching at the time.

Upon discovering Chassidus, Michoel decided to focus on learning, especially Chassidus. He spent the following years in yeshiva in Morristown. He acclimated well and enjoyed the lifestyle and especially connected to the mashpia, R' Avrohom Lipsker.

When he decided to go to back to painting, he received permission from the Rebbe to do this on condition that it would not disturb his studies in yeshiva. "Today," says Michoel, "after years of learning Chassidus, and connecting to the depth of the world of Kabbalah, my art takes on a whole new meaning. The work today is far more elevated. Every painting contains a hidden message; nothing is done without a reason. Even the colors I choose have a reason."

Colors, as explained in Kabbalah, have significance. Red is the color that represents gevura. As we see, every child knows that red means stop. White represents chesed. The combination of the two is pink, which corresponds to tiferes, rachamim.

"Even the inspiration for a given painting usually comes from something I learned in Chassidus that day or previously," he says. "Sometimes I see something in a sicha of the Rebbe, I hear a point from a maamar, and I get the inspiration from that. That leads to all sorts of ideas and images that I paint.

"As the Chassidic aphorism goes, from whatever I see and hear I try to learn a lesson; what does it say to me as a Chassid, and then, as an artist. This usually generates ideas for my work."

A number of years ago, R' Michoel held a special event for artists in the spirit of the year

of Hakhel, in the course of which he explained, with the help of a slideshow, that before learning about Chassidus, his artistic works were much darker and incomprehensible. They lacked color, which meant they lacked joy. Once he started learning Chassidus, his art became full of color and joy and mainly, feeling.

“My paintings,” explained Michoel to his fellow artists, “are meant to depict Jewish life, and how can that be done without colors? Without joy? Without *chayus*? And without Jewish-Chassidic emotion?” In his paintings, Judaism becomes something alive and joyous that is worthwhile to take part in.

The Soul in Art

Michoel's special craft is unique and is called mosaic art. He assembles pieces of stone that together comprise a work of art. The stones are placed in some material that holds them together. Mosaics are sometimes just designs with no images and sometimes shapes and images are depicted. The quality of the mosaic is determined by the size of the stones that are used (the smaller the stones, the more complicated the design can be). He can give weight to the images and designs (with the use of light and shadow) by using mosaic tiles.

In order to understand the uniqueness of his work, we attended an exhibit and met with some of his friends and employees.

Shloimy Rabin, his personal manager, shared his experiences of working with Michoel. “When I walk into Michoel's studio, I am amazed every time. The words ‘who renews in His goodness, every day, constantly,’ takes on additional meaning and I always feel as though this is the first time I am looking at Michoel's three dimensional art, and feel as though I am in it. I've never been to the Old City of Yerushalayim but with Michoel's art, I feel as though I am walking around there. With his art you can really live it.”

Michoel has many stories to share:

“In 5741, I sent the Rebbe a painting of the Jewish shtetl in which I depicted the old Jewish way of life. I got detailed feedback from the Rebbe. For example, I drew all sorts of enterprises in the town and the Rebbe wanted me to add a facility for the manufacture of Shabbos and Yom Tov candles.

“There were buildings of chesed organizations and I drew them on the left side. The shul was on the right. The Rebbe pointed out that based on what is explained in Chassidus and Kabbalah, it should be the other way around. Tefilla, which mostly corresponds to gevura, should be on the left, and those things associated with chesed should be on the right. The Rebbe added that the world stands on three things, the pillar on the right is chesed, the pillar on the left is tefilla, and the pillar in the center is for Torah study. Based on this, something having to do with Torah study should go in the center.

“Since then, when I use the three pillars, they are always in this order.”

One of the most famous instructions he got from the Rebbe has to do with Shabbos candles. This *hora'ah* pertains to every shliach and every Lubavitcher. When the candle lighting campaign began, Michoel designed a pin with two candles. When he submitted the sample to the Rebbe, the Rebbe asked him to add another small candle to indicate that a little girl should also light a Shabbos candle. On another occasion the Rebbe told him that the small candle should be in the center, between the two larger ones, not on the side.

I asked Michoel, where does the passion for painting come from and where does the desire to work in such a difficult field come from. He didn't have to think much to answer me; I suppose this isn't the first time he has been asked these questions.

At the end of the 50's there was an exhibit in Philadelphia by the artist, Jacques Lipchitz. In honor of the exhibit, the Rebbe sent a letter in English and when Michoel saw a copy of

it many years later it was a source of great inspiration for him.

This is what the Rebbe wrote, *“Those who have been Divinely gifted in art, whether sculpture or painting and the like, have the privilege of being able to convert an inanimate thing, such as a brush, paint and canvas, or wood and stone, etc., into living form. In a deeper sense, it is the ability to transform to a certain extent the material into spiritual, even where the creation is in still life, and certainly where the artistic work has to do with living creatures and humans. How much more so if the art medium is used to advance ideas, especially Torah and Mitzvoth, which would raise the artistic skill to its highest level.”*

The Rebbe went on to say that by artists showing the beauty of Torah and mitzvos, they have the ability to influence the Jewish people and draw them closer to their Father in heaven.

For R' Michoel, his work is his shlichus. It is his way of drawing Jews closer to Torah and mitzvos; it is his way of preparing the world for Moshiach. In his creations, he includes motifs of Geula and in depicting Yerushalayim you can see the Beis HaMikdash which arouses yearning for the future Geula.

Although he does not personally know most of his “mekuravim,” he makes an impact on thousands. Many became involved in Torah and mitzvos thanks to his art, whether through his books for children or one of his exhibits. Sometimes, the Jewish concepts that come to the viewers are totally new for them and sometimes they serve as reminders. When they see a mitzva in his art, they are reminded of how they used to do that mitzva at home.

The Rebbe Instructed that People Attend the Exhibit

While preparing this article, we tried to understand what art is altogether, what is painting, and what did the Rebbe think of it.

For Michoel, art is his form of expression; the way he chooses to express his feelings, feelings that sometimes are difficult to express verbally. Michoel says, “Art is something within you and you bring it out to those around you. The Rebbe once said to a painter who brought the Rebbe a gift of a painting he drew, that he was giving a part of his neshama to the Rebbe. Indeed, art comes from a deep place in the soul. When you convey this to others, you are giving them a part of your neshama.

“In 5737, I did an exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum. At the time, there was a large group of people from France who had come to see the Rebbe. In the middle of one of the farbrengens, in front of everyone, the Rebbe asked the group to go and see my exhibit. If I ever had doubts about whether the Rebbe liked my work, well, after that, any doubts disappeared. The Rebbe was asking them, in front of all the Chassidim, to go view my exhibit!

“What this event did for me and my work, I cannot express in words. All my doubts about whether this was really my shlichus, were resolved. Who would have believed?

“From what I saw and experienced, the Rebbe really enjoyed what I do. On another occasion, the Rebbe even asked me to design pushkas, something that wasn't so popular at the time. After that, I heard from one of the secretaries that the Rebbe left the pushka I designed in his office. My pushka on the Rebbe's desk!”

Aside from the influence Michoel has via his art, he also has a lot of influence on other artists that he deals with. He often comes across drawings of a mitzva done by non-Jews. They sometimes make mistakes in details of the mitzva. “For example, I have come across quite a few paintings of menorahs in which they drew five or some other number of branches other than eight. Someone who is not frum and sees this painting can easily become confused regarding this mitzva. When I see this, I take the opportunity not only to get it corrected but to convey to the artist a little more Judaism, a little more Chassidus.”

Art As A Kiruv Medium

When I asked Michoel to share some stories about Jews who became interested in Torah and mitzvos through his artwork, he laughed and said that there are many. He agreed to tell a few.

“At the beginning of the 80’s, a woman wearing a wig knocked at my door who looked like someone raised Lubavitch. She wanted to tell me her story.” She was from Tulsa, Oklahoma. A few years earlier, two bachurim visited her city on Merkos Shlichus. They brought kosher food and st’am and books for children illustrated by Michoel. The woman, who knew nothing about Judaism, bought her son a set of these books that tell children about Jewish life. Her son really liked the books and he got his parents to do things as depicted in the books. So without knowing any halacha, they began to keep mitzvos based on what it said in the books. They slowly began lighting candles for Shabbos, keeping kosher, and when the bachurim returned the following summer, the family contacted them and learned more about how to do mitzvos. Today, the family is Lubavitch in every respect thanks to the artwork he did for those books.

R’ Michoel has another story about a girl who attended an exhibit he did in Chicago. She loved his style and after a long talk he referred her to the local Chabad House where she became more Jewishly involved and then went to Machon Chana in Crown Heights.

Michoel ended off with a story about how his paintings helped shluchim too:

“On one of my visits to Uruguay, I had problems entering the country and they did not let me enter with my paintings. After a few attempts at persuasion, the shliach remembered a certain senior government person that had a connection with the customs authorities. That man had come with him to



the Rebbe for a bracha before the elections and was very favorably impressed. The shliach contacted him and within a few minutes, I was allowed into the country with all my paintings! The shliach told me that since then, every time they ran into trouble with customs, usually before Pesach when they import huge quantities of matzos and wine, that politician arranges everything for them without their even having to ask.”

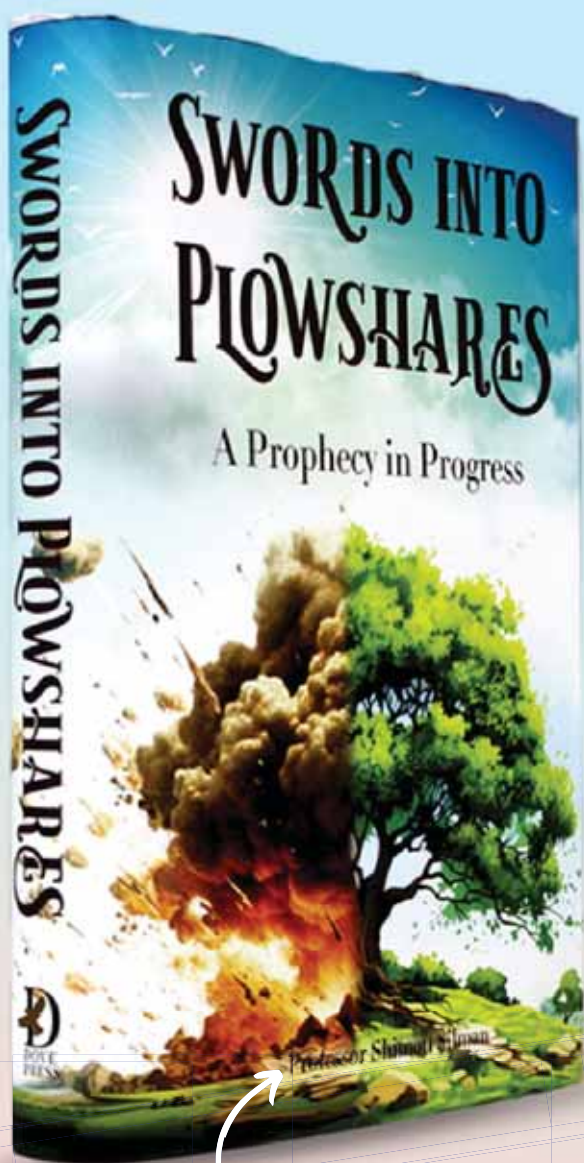
The Artist’s Dream

I asked Michoel whether he had any message to convey to our readers. He said, “Before, we spoke about horaos I got from the Rebbe that should be publicized. The Rebbe once told me, after I turned to him in a difficult time, that I need to think about divine providence and everything would work out. In my experience, this has helped me tremendously in stressful times.”

As for Michoel’s dream, “My dream is to prepare a new painting about the future Geula but not like my other paintings that are the products of my imagination. I want to draw from my personal experience of the actual Geula.” ■

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