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by Rabbi Shmuel Langsam

It was 1979 when my two-year-old son developed a hernia. It wasn't too serious, but we went to a few doctors, and they all told us he would need an operation. So I wrote to the Rebbe with two questions: Firstly, whether to undergo the operation. Secondly, if so, which surgeon to use, as each of the doctors had recommended someone else.

The Rebbe's answer was simple: "In all of the above, follow the advice of Dr. Feldman."
Dr. Robert Feldman was a community physician in Crown Heights for many decades, but at that time he was practicing in the Bronx. We had already gone to see him, and having heard his opinion, we assumed there was no reason to ask again.

But Rabbi Binyomin Klein, the Rebbe's secretary (and a cousin of ours), suggested otherwise. "Dr. Feldman was just with the Rebbe today," he told me, "and they likely spoke about your son's case. You might be able to learn more about what the Rebbe said." Rabbi Klein advised that we visit Dr. Feldman. So we went to the Bronx, and Dr. Feldman told us what happened.

"Can you do me a favor?" the Rebbe had asked him.
The Rebbe told Dr. Feldman about my letter. "You advised him to see a Dr. Soe in the Bronx," the Rebbe said. "But I was thinking that maybe you should send him to Toronto."

The Shouldice Hospital in Toronto, to which the Rebbe referred many people, was dedicated exclusively to hernia repairs. They had a method of operating without general anesthesia, which the Rebbe thought was best to avoid, and this is why he wanted Dr. Feldman to send us there.

"But," the Rebbe went on, "I don't know if they would do this procedure on a two-year-old, as he might be too young. Could you please call the hospital and check whether they'd perform their special method on such a young child?"

"And one more thing: If they're willing to do it, try to schedule it for the 25th of the Hebrew month of Sivan." The date the Rebbe gave was a little more than two months away.

The Rebbe sought to clear up any misunderstanding about the date. "I didn't pick it because it's a special time. His wife's sister is getting married in Toronto on the 24th, so they'll be in town anyway. Why should they make a second trip?"

In the end, the hospital wouldn't perform the operation on a toddler, so we went to Dr. Soe. But we were able to see how the Rebbe had all this information in his head. He kept track of who my sister-in-law is, and when we'd be traveling for her wedding – and all of this, without checking the invitation!

You don't need to look up the date of your child's upcoming wedding, right? Well, that day the Rebbe made us feel like his children. Which brings me to this other story, with my mother, from many years earlier, when I was just four years old.

My mother hadn't been feeling well, and she went from one doctor to another, until one day in the middle of Chanuka, a professor in Manhattan told her that she had cancer.

It was 1952, and there were no treatments that could cure her of the dreaded disease. The professor told her to go home and enjoy her family for the next couple of months, and that would be that.

My mother did get on the train, but she went directly to 770. She marched up to Rabbi Hodakov, the Rebbe's secretary, and declared, "I need to speak with the Rebbe."

"In the middle of the day?! You can't do that." The Rebbe didn't meet people during the day. And as it was Chanuka, there weren't any nighttime appointments either. Besides, there was a long waiting list. "Maybe we can get you something in three months from now," said Rabbi Hodakov.

"I don't have three months," my mother protested. "I need to see the Rebbe now!"

They went back and forth, with Rabbi Hodakov suggesting that she write to the Rebbe and she insisting on speaking with him in. In the end, she wrote to the Rebbe that she wanted to talk to him. When Rabbi Hodakov came out of the Rebbe's office, he told her she was to wait at the Rebbe's door after afternoon services. When the Rebbe walked up to his study that afternoon, you can bet my mother was standing there. She told him about her condition.

Before I tell you the Rebbe's response, I need to explain my mother's background. In 1946, she had fled the Soviet Union as a most wanted criminal. What was her crime? While living in Samarkand with my father, she had been working to help other Jews escape the clutches of the communists.

Others forged documents to help these beleaguered Jews escape. But my mother managed to obtain real papers by paying off a woman who worked for the NKVD. Many Jews managed to

escape the Soviet Union using these passports.

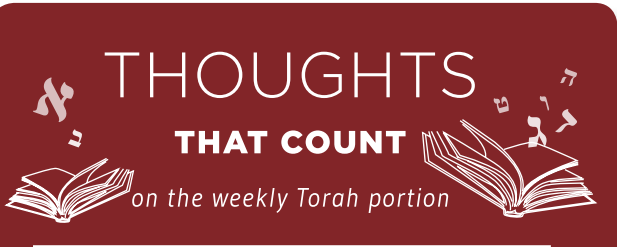
Years later, Rabbi Simcha Gorodetzky, a chasid who had been jailed for illegally spreading Judaism in Russia, told us that at one point the authorities offered to lighten his sentence if he would help them find my mother. She had been in America for nearly ten years by that point, but they were still trying to find her. They're probably still looking.

All this is to say that my mother was not a woman who was easily fazed. So as she was frantically telling the Rebbe that the doctors had given her just two months to live, he slowed her down. "I don't recognize you from Samarkand!" he exclaimed.

The Rebbe himself had never been to Samarkand, but he knew of the dangerous activities she had been involved with there. It was his way of telling her that a brave person like her did not need to become hysterical after hearing one diagnosis from one doctor.

"Listen to what I'm telling you," the Rebbe said. "Go home. Give your children Chanuka gelt, make latkes, and forget about what the doctor said."

My mother never heard another word about that cancer, and she lived for another 40 years.



Then shall the priest command to take for the one who is to be cleansed two healthy, clean birds (Lev. 14:4)

Why were two birds used in the purification of a leper? One of the causes of the affliction of leprosy was gossip, a sin that causes a good relationship between two people to turn sour. The Hebrew word for bird, "tzippor," has the numerical equivalent of 376, the same as the word for peace, "shalom." The Torah alludes to the fact that in order for the leper to be forgiven, he must first make peace between the two individuals he has caused to quarrel. Accordingly, two birds are used in the purification procedure, symbolic of the two people involved. (Our Sages)

And the priest shall take one of the sheep and offer it as a guilt offering (Lev. 14:12)

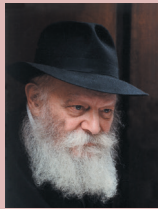
A guilt offering was generally brought for transgressions of sacrilege. The leper, who had committed the sin of slander and haughtiness, was guilty of such sacrilege against G-d. "He who commits a sin in private drives away the Divine Presence." A person who whispers his gossip, glancing right and left to see if anyone else can hear, has forgotten that there is an ear above that hears every word that is uttered. Likewise, a haughty person also causes the Divine Presence to depart, as it states, "Both he and I cannot dwell in the same place." (Sforno)

When they defile My sanctuary in their midst (Lev. 15:31)
When a person defiles himself, he defiles the Divine sanctuary – the Jewish soul – with which he is endowed. For every Jew is created in the image of G-d, and the Divine Presence dwells within him. Going against the will of G-d by sinning causes the sanctuary to become sullied. (Abarbanel)



7:10 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
7 Nissan // April 8
Torah Portion Metzora
Shabbat Hagadol
Shabbat ends 8:11 pm



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion of Metzora we learn about the laws of a "Metzora," one who contracted a spiritual affliction called Tzaraat.

Last week's portion discussed the laws of diagnosing and quarantining the Metzora. This week's portion teaches the process of purification that the Metzora would undergo to re-enter the Jewish camp.

The purification process starts with the words "This is the Torah (law) of the Metzora." However, looking back to the laws of diagnosing and quarantining there is no such preface. Wouldn't it have made sense to say "This is the Torah of the Metzora" at the start of the laws of the Metzora? Why wait until the purification process to say this?

The real question is, what do we see when you meet a Metzora? Do you focus on the ailment, or on the possibility for the person to reenter society? How does the Metzora view himself? Does he see himself as an outcast? Or as a person who was granted the opportunity and the time to search his ways and refine himself to have a more meaningful existence upon re-entry?

Therefore by the purification and re-entry the Torah says "THIS is the Torah of the Metzora." The focus needs to be on the positive.

It is natural for us to focus on the negative. When a child or student misbehaves, when a colleague or friend disappoints, or when life hands us a devastating blow, it is easy to focus on the negative.

Of course the child needs to be taught appropriate behavior, the disappointment and the devastation hurts. Expressing the hurt and sadness is necessary, just as the Metzora needs to be quarantined. These steps may be necessary but they need to ultimately be trumped by positive purposeful thinking and action.

I remember when I was finished my first round of tests. The neurologist told me, "You have bulbar ALS." He explained the severity of it to me and referred me to a specialist. I was alone. Walking out of his office I broke down in bitter tears. When I composed myself I headed out of the building. The first thing I saw was a young man having a seizure. I ran to help him.

It dawned on me that there is still much purpose for me. I decided that regardless of the outcome of any future "tests" I would remain positive and find ways to fill life with meaning and purpose. This has turned my life and the lives of those around me happier and by far more fulfilling.

We all suffer hardships and pain, it's what we do with them that makes the difference, "This is the Torah of the Metzora."

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

When Good Enough Wasn't

by Rabbi Eli Friedman

When the Rebbe was a child, he won a tree-climbing contest he was having with his friends, by climbing higher than anyone else. When his mother asked for the secret to his success, the boy who would be Rebbe explained tree-climbing and his entire worldview in one simple response.

But first this.

When the Rebbe took the helm of Chabad worldwide, with his finger squarely on the pulse of the new generation, the Rebbe unveiled the mission and identified the new enemy. Fear was gone – the new enemy was complacency. And the new mission was joyous, endless, tireless activity.

The Rebbe saw that in the new world, complacency would paralyze Jewish life, and so he declared dissatisfaction to be the call of the day. He challenged the Chasidim, both in word and in example, to be insatiable in their thirst for perpetual growth, achievement and contribution.

And just like that, good enough just wasn't. No matter the size of any given accomplishment, the Rebbe urged that it be doubled; tripled; quadrupled.

The Rebbe was an "equal-opportunity urger." He urged scholars to write more, much more! He urged Yeshiva students to study more, much, much more! The Rebbe urged emissaries to do more, much more! He urged couples to have more children, much more! He urged philanthropists to give more, far more! The Rebbe urged every Jew to more mitzvot, many, many more! He urged everyone to create more energy, more joy, more goodness and more kindness – much, much more.

And the Rebbe urged us to bring Moshiach faster; much, much faster.

The Rebbe lit a fire in the heart of a generation. But not just the fire of courage; the fire of urgency. Instead of reassuring people that their achievements were "good enough", the Rebbe reminded people: "Good is good; but better is even better."

If Chabad today has done anything for anyone, anywhere, it is because of their Rebbes. The Rebbes who bothered to get to know their people and their circumstances and lead in a way that would resonate with the present time and the present mind.

And for us, it is thanks to the Rebbe who saw in us unlimited potential, indescribable potential, a "vast land of endless opportunity," and coached us to make it real by declaring war on complacency and embracing the reality that good is never, ever good enough.

So what did the Rebbe tell his mother? He said that his friends failed when they climbed up but looked down. Looking down to see how far they'd come did them in and brought them down. The Rebbe reported that he had decided to only look up, never down. Instead of admiring how far he'd come, he would look to see how much more needed to be climbed.

So until Moshiach comes speedily in our days here's the plan: Don't look back; only look forward. Then there is no limit to what you can get done and to the amount of lives you can touch.

For the Rebbe who always looked for more, we can do no less.

Rabbi Eli Friedman, together with his wife Shaini, direct Chabad of Calabasas, CA

SLICE OF LIFE

Divine Mission



Once, her children and grandchildren (she has over 500 descendants) put together a list of questions to ask Rebbetzin Chave Hecht and videotaped her answers. Her intelligence, eloquence, warmth and humility shine throughout her 3½ hours of responses and story-telling. When asked, “What is your greatest accomplishment?” Rebbetzin Hecht immediately quipped, “I have 13 greatest accomplishments.”

Rebbetzin Hecht gave birth to ten children, adopted two sons, and often referred to Camp Emunah as her 13th child. The flagship camp of all Chabad girls camps world-wide, Camp Emunah in the Catskill Mountains will be opening for its 70th summer this year.

In the summer of 1952, while spending time in New York’s Catskill Mountains, Rabbi “JJ” (Yaakov Yehuda) and Rebbetzin Hecht visited Camp Agudah, an early Orthodox Jewish boys’ overnight camp. Rebbetzin Hecht, already a passionate educator, was struck by the atmosphere of the camp’s joyous Shabbat meals and dreamed of creating a camp of her own for girls.

The Hechts wrote to the Rebbe, and received his approval and blessing to open up a girls’ overnight camp. The camp would give a summer of wholesome Jewish fun to the public school children who attended the “Release Time” sister program as well as girls from the Chabad-Lubavitch and other orthodox communities. In the summer of 1953, Rebbetzin Hecht opened Camp Emunah (today known as Camp Emunah Bnos Yaakov Yehudah),

which has grown to serve 600 campers in six divisions each summer, including the Sunshine Circle division geared for girls with special needs, a teen camp, Bat Mitzva Division and more.

Throughout the years, tens of thousands of campers and staff were directly affected by Rebbetzin Hecht and their Camp Emunah experience.

Recalled Rebbetzin Hecht, “I think the greatest thrill is that after the summer when parents call me and tell me the effect that camp Emunah had on their child. My child came home a different child. I’m so proud of her..... That’s the greatest thing to me.

Through it all, Rebbetzin Hecht ran the day-to-day camp operations for decades. Her husband’s synagogue didn’t allow him to leave for the summer. He came up only for Shabbat. “She slept in her office,” recalls her eldest child, Rabbi Sholem Ber Hecht, a Chabad emissary in Queens. “In the early years, she had no secretary; if you called the camp at 7 a.m. or 10 p.m., she answered the phone.”

“There was a time when it was difficult for us to get enough counselors. We had so many campers! And girls wanted to work in day camps run by Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries all around the world. They felt working with children in these far-away places was a real ‘shlichus’ (important undertaking from the Rebbe). So I asked the Rebbe if working in Camp Emunah is also considered a shlichus. The Rebbe responded, ‘Camp Emunah is literally G-d’s shlichus.’

“At a certain point,” Rebbetzin Hecht continued, when she was already in her 60s, “I thought I’d ease myself out of camp. ‘What am I doing upstate in camp, leaving my husband alone all week long in the city? Let someone else take over the job,’ I thought.”

A summer or two later, Rabbi Hecht passed away. “The Rebbe sent his personal secretary Rabbi Binyomin Klein to the *shiva* with three questions. One of the questions was how do we want the organization to be. [Rabbi Hecht had been the Executive Director of NCFJE, an umbrella organization for over 15 schools, educational projects and humanitarian aid programs.] We sent in two plans to the Rebbe of how NCFJE would run in my husband’s absence. The Rebbe picked one of the two plans. And even though we did not mention Camp Emunah specifically, the Rebbe said, ‘And your mother remains in camp.’

Just last summer, the-then 94-year-old indefatigable overnight-camp director was still imparting instructions and advice to her staff – even after suffering a stroke in camp two years earlier – as

she’d done for nearly seven decades.

“The Rebbe was not only our Rebbe,” related Rebbetzin Hecht in an interview with the N’Shei Chabad Newsletter, “he was our personal *mashpia* (mentor). We always consulted with the Rebbe regarding every facet of our lives.

“To give you an understanding of this close relationship, we were honored that the Rebbe agreed to be *sandek* at the *brit mila* (circumcision) of our firstborn son, Sholom Dov Ber, in 1946. That was the first time the Rebbe ever served as a sandek at a brit. Having never been a sandek before, the Rebbe asked the Previous Rebbe [his father-in-law, who was the Rebbe at that time] what he needed to know in order to be sandek. The Previous Rebbe answered simply, ‘A sandek must hold the baby firmly!’ We were also honored to receive the only letter that the Rebbe ever sent on the occasion of Sholem Ber’s *pidyon haben* (redemption of the first-born ceremony).

“After my husband passed away, I was asked to speak and tell stories about my husband and the Rebbe at the Shluchos Convention. The first year after my husband’s passing, the thought of speaking about him publicly was very difficult, because I was afraid I would break down crying. The second year, however, I did accept their request.

“It was customary for the *Shluchos* (women emissaries) to pass by the Rebbe for a blessing in honor of the convention, along with women from the entire community. The year that I spoke, in addition to giving a blessing, the Rebbe also gave out a booklet with Torah thoughts. When the thousands of women were lined up to go to the Rebbe, there was an indescribable tumult. As I stood before the Rebbe, he asked me, ‘Was it successful?’

“I was deeply touched. To me this showed the greatness of the Rebbe. The Rebbe knew about every detail that pertained to his chasidim. Amidst all that tumult, with all the truly important burdens he was carrying, the Rebbe stopped to ask me how my speech went. The Rebbe knew how to make each individual feel important, and this is an approach I try to apply every day in Camp Emunah.”

Rebbetzin Hecht passed away in February at the age of 95. One of her grandsons, Rabbi Ari Raskin, points out, “My Bubby was born on 13 Tishrei. That day is the *yartzeit* (anniversary of passing) of the Rebbe Maharash, renowned for his outlook of approaching any obstacle with the determination to overcome it. She passed away on 7 Adar, the birthday and *yartzeit* of Moses, who epitomized Torah and humility, two of my Bubby’s greatest qualities.”

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

11 Nisan, 5734 (1974)

Rabbi Cunin duly conveyed to me your kind regards, letter and good wishes, which I heartfully appreciate.

I can best reciprocate your good wishes by reiterating the Divine blessing given to our Father Abraham, “I will bless them that bless thee.” Accordingly may you and all your family enjoy G-d’s blessings in a generous measure, both materially and spiritually.

I trust you recall our discussion and my suggestion that you be actively involved in spreading Yiddishkeit in your environment, especially through the Chabad-Lubavitch institutions and projects.

In addition to the great importance of this activity per se, and the rewards that go with it both in this world and the next, it will include in its immediate effects also the benefit of banishing depressing thoughts and releasing new sources of energy and enthusiasm in the right direction, in the spirit of the Festival of Our Liberation which we are about to celebrate, including liberation from all negative and distracting aspects in the daily life.

11 Nisan, 5734 [1974]

..I can best reciprocate your good wishes by reiterating the Divine blessing given to our Father Abraham, “I will bless them that bless thee.” Accordingly...

It is surely unnecessary to emphasize to you at length how much Sefardic families cherish their distinguished Sefardic tradition, especially those of Priestly (Kohanim) descent, as in your case.

I am fairly certain that your father Eliahu, of blessed memory, and his ancestors, proudly added to their signature “s.t.” which, according to one interpretation, means *sefardi tahor* – of pure Sefardic descent.

May G-d grant that this golden chain of tradition will be continued through your children, and children’s children to the coming of Moshiach Tzidkenu...

30 Nisan, 5738 [1978]

I was deeply gratified to receive your letter with the co-signatures of Rabbi Moshe Hersen and your other distinguished friends and associates, especially after having seen you at the *farbrengen*

[Chasidic gathering], joining in the singing and adding to the general spirit of the occasion.

Your letter was all the more meaningful in that it contained also a glowing report of the First Annual National Founders Dinner of the Rabbinical College of America. May G-d grant that you should always have good news to report about the ever growing success of this great Torah institution, above all about a steady increase in the student body and their advancement in Torah education.

For, as has often been emphasized, the purpose of this unique Torah facility is not only to ensure the personal advancement of the students in Torah education, but that each one should become a dynamic source of influence and inspiration in his family and surroundings, to illuminate them with the eternal light of our Torah, for the benefit of our people and for the betterment of the environment at large.

To conclude on the opening note of your letter, I heartily reciprocate your good wishes in connection with my birthday, which I can best do by reiterating the Divine promise to our Father Abraham “I (G-d, the Source of all blessings) will bless them that bless you.” ...

4 Iyar, 5738 [1978]

To begin with a bracha [blessing], I want to convey to you my sincere appreciation of your good wishes for my health and in connection with my birthday.

I prayerfully reciprocate your good wishes by reiterating the Divine promise to our Father Abraham, “I (G-d, the Source of all blessings) will bless them that bless you.”

Accordingly, may G-d bestow His generous blessing on you and your children and all yours, in all needs, especially to have true Yiddish Chasidish Torah nachas from each other and from each and all of your children, and to enjoy it in good health and hatzlacha in all affairs.

I was particularly pleased that your good wishes were accompanied by your recently concluded work which, I trust, is the forerunner of further accomplishments in this area as well as in related fields, for which I wish you a special hatzlacha.

I am particularly appreciative of your devoted and untiring effort to prepare for publishing the paper of my late brother, a”h. Although it is not in my field, I can see clearly that it was not simply a case of editing, but represents almost a total revision and reworking of the paper.

In addition to being instrumental in the publication of it as perfectly as possible, it is also a case of gemilut chesed [an act of kindness] for one who is in the World of Truth, which is designated as “chesed shel emet,” and is one of the highest forms of chesed. I appreciate what you have done more than I can express in words.

a person’s birth is once again ascendent, giving him power and strength. Thus, the birthday of Mashiach is a time when he, and the Redemption with which he is associated, are granted new power. This power, in turn, hastens the advent of the day when the Redemption will become actually manifest.

(Sound the Great Shofar; p.74)

“A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is a Jewish custom to say daily the chapter of Psalms corresponding to one’s age. This coming Tuesday, 11 Nissan, is the 120th birthday of the Rebbe. Jews worldwide will begin saying Psalm 121 in the Rebbe’s honor.

The heading before this chapter explains this Psalm as “a description of how G-d watches over us.” In the eight verses of Psalm 121, the word “guard” or “guardian” appears six times, assuring us that G-d is indeed watching over us. These six references to guarding are for the six week days; the seventh day, Shabbat itself, watches over the Jewish people.

It is customary to place a copy of Psalm 121 in the labor room immediately upon the expectant mother’s arrival at the hospital. This guards the mother and child during labor and delivery and following the birth.

Psalm 121, which begins, “I lift up my eyes...” is one of the most popular prayers in times of trouble. In the first verse, King David asks, “I lift up my eyes to the mountains – from where will my help come?”

Chasidic teachings explain, “A wise question is half the answer.” The answer to this question is implied within the question itself. Our deliverance comes from a level of trust in G-d that is beyond human comprehension; we know that all will turn out for the best. This thought transforms our initial distress into a joyous song.

When the person in distress lifts up his eyes, he sees the mountains. But not just any mountains, two very special mountains – Mount Sinai and Mount Moriah. Mount Sinai represents Torah study as the Torah was given on it. Mount Moriah represents prayer, as the Holy Temple was built on it. But even one who studies Torah and prays, where will his help come from? The second verse answers, “My help comes from G-d – mei-im Hashem.” These words are similar to the words in an upcoming chapter of Psalms “ki im Hashem Hachessed – for with G-d is kindness.” We are thus enjoined to remember the “third pillar” upon which the world stands – acts of kindness, especially in difficult times.

As a gift to the Rebbe on his 120th birthday, let us all increase in acts of goodness and kindness and then surely G-d will do the ultimate kindness for the world and bring Moshiach NOW!

Shmuel Butman

L’ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקה

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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Today Is...

8 Nissan

Every soul has its particular avoda, in the areas of intellect and emotions, in accordance with that soul’s nature and character. It is written in Psalms: “From my foes have You given me wisdom”; from the evil tendencies one detects in his natural traits, he can become wise and know how to handle the correction of these traits, and how to subordinate his powers, in the service of G-d.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

A birthday is a time when the specific constellation which was in force during



Everything You Always Wanted

Jews can celebrate their Jewishness, and Passover, wherever they find themselves together with the Rebbe’s emissaries. Whether you want to purchase hand-baked “shmurah matza” for your own Seder, or would like to join a Chabad-Lubavitch communal Seder, sell your *chametz*, need advice on how to make your home “kosher for Passover,” Chabad-Lubavitch is your place. Call your local center or visit Passover.net to find your closest Seder, as well as fun for the kids, loads of resources, articles, and even recipes!

New Emissaries

On 11 Nissan, 1972, the Rebbe asked for the establishment of 71 new Chabad institutions in honor of his 70th birthday. With over 3,000 Chabad-Lubavitch Centers around the globe today, the call went out by a group of emissaries to establish gift the Rebbe with 1,210 new projects for the Rebbe’s 120th birthday. Pledged as we go to press, range from bringing out new emissaries and building new Chabad Houses, *shuls*, and centers, to establishing regular programming for a new demographic or population like activities for seniors, those incarcerated, college students, and more, are 1222 new projects!