

REACHING OUT AND HELPING OTHERS

By Yosef Yitzchok Kupchik

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This is how I met Shlomo (pseudonym). I went on mitzvaim, as I do every week, to a real estate office. The Jew working there doesn't speak a word of Hebrew and I don't speak English. Our relationship is conducted mainly through the heart – putting on t'fillin, saying l'chaim, and handing out a weekly brochure.

That week, just as I walked in, someone was coming out. I stopped him and stammered in English, "Are you Jewish? Did you put on t'fillin yet today?"

"Yes, I'm Jewish," he said in fluent Hebrew, "and I'd be happy to put on t'fillin."

As he removed the t'fillin, I

gave him the weekly brochure and said, "It has a miracle of the Lubavitcher Rebbe." To my great surprise he said, "You know what? I can tell you a miracle of the Rebbe! I was released from jail two weeks ago thanks to the Rebbe!"

Really? I took out a bottle of mashke and a package of cookies that I brought along with me for occasions like this. I put them down on the table and we began to farbreng.

A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

My name is Shlomo and I work in real estate and finance. I have three offices in New York and baruch Hashem, I make a

nice living. A little more than two years ago, my partner and I perpetrated tax evasion on a large scale and when we felt they were on to us, we decided to escape to Europe.

We were in Germany when we were arrested. The FBI was able to find us within a short time and we were extradited to the US. The crimes we were accused of were very serious. All the experts and friends we consulted with were pessimistic and predicted we'd be in jail for years and penalized with a large fine.

I wasn't religiously observant at the time, but during the extradition and jail time in the US I had plenty of time to think about being a Jew. The gentiles around me treated me differently, but I didn't know what it really meant to be Jewish.

I asked G-d to provide me with an answer. It came soon after. I got an Israeli newspaper published in America called *Yediot America* and when I opened it, I was amazed to see an article about a rabbi, R' Shmuel Spritzer, who works with Jewish prisoners through an organization called Reaching Out! I saw this as an answer from Heaven, personally directed at me.

I immediately wrote to the rabbi and asked him to help me start being a real Jew. In his response, he was very

encouraging. He explained that where I was, Hashem was with me and watching over me. As a start, he decided to help me keep kosher in jail.

SIX YEARS IN JAIL OR TWO YEARS PLUS A HEAVY FINE

My partner and I contacted a top lawyer. He was also skeptical about our chances. "In the best case scenario, you'll sit in jail for ten years," he said.

After difficult negotiations, he managed to work out a plea bargain with the judge, who gave us two choices: Six years in jail and another six years on probation or two years in jail and another four on probation plus a fine of half a million dollars!

I didn't hesitate for a minute. Our freedom was more important than money, especially when three of us were able to split the cost of the fine.

The date of the sentencing was set for two months later and by that time we were supposed to have come up with the money. It was a large sum, but since three of us were working on obtaining it,

it was feasible. It seemed that would be the end of the story. We'd pay the fine, sit in jail for two years (we hadn't dreamed we'd serve less) and return to normal life.

Two weeks before the sentencing I got a surprise and it wasn't a good one. It was the worst surprise of my life. I discovered that my two partners had fled the US and I had to pay the entire fine.

What could I do? I had the option of turning state's evidence, to testify against my two partners and go free. I was very uncertain about this. If I turned them in, they wouldn't get out of jail for years. If I didn't, I would have to pay half a million dollars out of my pocket – and I didn't have it!

THE REBBE SAID: DON'T PAY IT!

I remembered R' Spritzer, whom I had contacted a month and a half earlier, and I wrote him a letter asking him whether I could turn in my partners in exchange for my freedom. R' Spritzer wrote me back that according to the Torah, it was forbidden to send another Jew to jail, even in exchange for my freedom.

What was I to do? I didn't have the money and I couldn't turn my friends in. I asked R' Spritzer what he would do in my place and he answered that he would write to the Rebbe.

Rebbe? What Rebbe? How could he help me? Did he have money? Did he have connections with the judge?

I had a long conversation with him about the Rebbe, the Rosh B'nei Yisroel, Nasi HaDor, and how he is concerned about every Jew. R' Spritzer explained how you write to the Rebbe and how you get his bracha.

I wrote to the Rebbe and sent the letter to R'

אני בסך הכל שליח

מאת: אסתר שווארץ

הרב שמואל שפרטצער, ממנהל בית דין 25 שנה באמריקה וישראלים, מתגלה כמסורתי
שליח מיוחד למעשה אומנם לא, בראיון קצרות דעת הוא טוען שמדינת ישראל אינה להחליט
"תור איכותיות מספר על המצב שבו חיות כל המעורבים במשפט המכונה 'השאלה' שכל
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The author of the newspaper interview of R' Spritzer, Esther Schwartz, told Beis Moshiah: "After the article was published, we got dozens of phone calls from people who wanted to call R' Spritzer and asked for his phone number. It was exciting to hear that thanks to this article, he was able to help another Jew who experienced a big miracle."

R' Spritzer: "She tried to interview me over the course of a year and I had no time for it. It was only a year later that I agreed to be interviewed. Shlomo went into jail right before the interview. If I had been interviewed earlier, he wouldn't have read the article, and even if he had, it's unlikely that he would have related an article about a rabbi who works with prisoners to him, a free man."

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Spritzer. He faxed me a copy of two pages in the *Igros Kodesh*. I read it and didn't understand any of it. In the last lines of the second page appeared two words, "don't pay!" This was followed by a bracha from the Rebbe for the imminent Geula. That was the only part I understood and the answer was clear. I wasn't going to pay a cent and I wasn't going to sit in jail for very long.

My cell phone rang and it was my lawyer. "Nu Shlomo, did you manage to get the money together?"

"Don't worry," I told him. "Everything's fine. I have most of the money." He called again, a week before the trial and I told him again that I had the money and everything would be fine.

The day of the trial I was sitting in my lawyer's car on the way to the courthouse. On the way he asked me, "Where's the money? How are you going to pay – in cash?"

"The money? I'm not going to pay!"

"What?!" He hit the brakes and nearly caused an accident. "You're not going to pay?"

In all sincerity I began telling him what I had heard about the Rebbe, but he wasn't willing to listen.

"Are you crazy? Get out of my

car! I am not going to represent you in court. My reputation is at stake here and when the newspapers find out that my client received the maximum sentence, I'm finished!"

I suggested that we leave the debate for a less pressured time since the trial was about to begin. We arrived at the courthouse and were besieged by reporters. They were all certain that it would end with the maximum sentence for the one partner who remained in America: me.

I was the calmest person there. I smiled at everyone. I was confident in the Rebbe's bracha.

The judge banged his gavel. "I will ask the prosecutor to deliver his closing arguments." The prosecutor got up and explained the seriousness of our crimes, the fleeing to Europe, and worst of all if the judge did not punish us severely – everybody would learn from us.

My lawyer grew more and more nervous. He realized that the plea bargain that he had worked so hard to obtain was in danger. As for me, I read some chapters of T'hillim. Everybody was sure I had lost my mind.

When the prosecutor was finished with his concluding remarks, the judge asked the defense to speak. My lawyer was nervous as he read his speech. He was sure all was lost. There was a deal and his crazy client hadn't kept to it.

Finally, there came the surprising ruling of the judge.

"The two sides have presented arguments against the existing sentence. The (state) prosecutor argued against mitigating it and the defense has argued against its severity. In this dispute, the court finds with the defense. The court has decided that the defendant will be sentenced to only two

years jail time. The terms of the probation will remain as is, and will continue for four years."

The lawyer was flabbergasted. The judge had simply forgotten the previous summation. He didn't say a word about a huge fine. It was as though our entire deal had been deleted from the computer and this laughable sentence had replaced it.

An additional amazing thing is that the judge agreed to include the time I had spent when extradited as well as the jail time I had done in the US thus far, so all I had left to serve was a little more than a year in jail.

I saw the fulfillment of the Rebbe's bracha in that I hadn't even paid the court reporter fees to the court (\$750), an amount always charged to the defense with no connection to the outcome of the trial. The Rebbe wrote, "In my opinion, don't pay." I didn't pay a cent!

After a few months in jail, I stood before a parole board, which decides whether an inmate deserves to be released on parole. I sent R' Spritzer another letter and enclosed a letter to the Rebbe. The result? The committee decided that I should be released.

* * *

Still stunned by the miracle, I told Shlomo that the Rebbe doesn't like it when Chassidim only tell him their tzaros. He wants to hear the good news too. I suggested he come to 770 and write to the Rebbe about his release. He readily agreed and told me, "Believe me, I write to the Rebbe every month."

Here was a Jew who had never seen the Rebbe and had barely heard of him and he has such wholehearted faith. He writes to the Rebbe every month.

A STORY IN INSTALLMENTS

R' Shmuel Spritzer tells us what happened next: Shlomo was so overcome by the miracle that he wanted to commit to a full observance of mitzvos immediately. He came to 770 and after davening he asked, "How should I start?"

I told him to start with t'fillin and Shlomo began putting on t'fillin every day.

One year ago, on 4 Nissan, I went to 770 to buy brochures for mitzvaim. I usually don't buy them myself; a bachur buys them for me, but that day I bought them. I went down to the basement where the Mivtzaim center is located.

I was walking around, taking some brochures from here and some from there, in another language when someone said to me, "On Sunday, there will be a big Kinus for Israelis. Would you like to bring someone?"

I thought of Shlomo and called him and he was happy to attend. I did not stay in 770 for the entire Kinus but I assigned Itzik to him, who already knew him, and he took good care of him. By the end of the Kinus, Shlomo decided to keep kosher.

Before the big parade on Lag B'Omer, I called Shlomo and invited him. He was happy to come and said he would bring some friends. The parade was fantastic and they loved it.

Afterwards, one of the group wanted to write to the Rebbe about a problem he had. He did not want to say what it was. I asked one of the T'mimim to help him. The answer he opened to was in Yiddish and the bachur's Yiddish wasn't good enough to translate it. They came back to me and asked me to translate it.

I read the letter and translated it as Shlomo and his friends stood around. I read and the friend cried. "The Rebbe hit the nail on the head," he said. When I had finished reading the letter, Shlomo said that the Rebbe had written to him too and he had gotten an answer in that letter.

One of the bachurim had to go into 770 for a minute and the rest of the group waited for him outside. As they waited, an older man came over

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Yechi Adoneinu Morim V'Rabim Mitzch HaMoshiach U'Olam V'ed

The Coming of Moshiach

The Torah teaches that in every generation, there is always someone in existence who has the potential to be the Moshiach. The only reason why this potential Moshiach, throughout history, has not gone on to become the actual Moshiach is because the generation did not merit it. However, for the generation that merits it, when the time comes, G-d will reveal Himself to that person and bestow upon him the "Spirit of Moshiach". As such, the "Spirit of Moshiach" is really the essence and vitality of Moshiach - for it is that which makes him the Moshiach. For once the "Spirit of Moshiach" is revealed in this person, it means that Moshiach is here, in the world, and ready to do his professed mission.

Since there are clearly defined prerequisites for who can or cannot be Moshiach, the identity of the potential candidate is generally evident. For the person destined to be the Moshiach must be a man of flesh and blood who can trace his lineage to the original House of King David. And he must be an expert in Jewish Law and practice. Furthermore, prior to his being revealed as Moshiach, he will have already established himself as a leader amongst the Jewish people. Therefore, in short, he will be a man, practicing, righteous Rabbi.

When the time comes for G-d to send the Moshiach, the "Spirit of Moshiach" is revealed in this Jewish leader, which marks the onset of the "Days of Moshiach". Then, the full revelation of Moshiach comes, through his actions of building the Temple in Jerusalem and the regathering of the exiles to the Land of Israel.

The Lubavitch Rebbe, the true leader of our generation, merited his unique privilege by 99 generations back to King David. He has prophesied that the time of the final Redemption has arrived after almost 2000 years of exile, and Jewish law states that a good prophecy must be fulfilled. The onset of some, but our generation is not fitting for the Redemption is in itself a

proof that now is the right time, since Moshiach will come, as is stated, when we find ourselves in such a lovely situation that one doesn't see any possibility of his arrival.

Since we have seen the fulfillment of all the previous prophecies of the Lubavitch Rebbe (including the first Gulf War in 1991, when all experts were pessimistic and warned Israel of gas warfare, the Rebbe was the only one that prophesied that Jews will see great miracles. Indeed, the entire world witnessed these miracles as the 33 and a half million Jews who were not killed in a single day). There is no doubt that the Rebbe's prophecy regarding the immediate revelation of Moshiach and the subsequent complete and everlasting Redemption is already being materialized.

When Moshiach is revealed, we will be filled with genuine joy, as all G-d's promises will be fulfilled. No more prisons, no more war, no more suffering, and no more death - everything will be perfect. There will be no troubles or war, and even war equipment will be turned into good and positive things. Also non-Jews, especially those that were helpful to the Jewish people while in exile, will lead and promote meaningful lives with the adherence of the Universal Mosaic Law, believing in the One Supreme Being that created the heavens and earth.

Before the final revelation of Moshiach, there will be a period when Moshiach will become concealed and not be able to be seen. The Talmud tells us something very similar about our Patriarch Yaakov (Jacob). Once after he had been buried, the Talmud teaches that he did not die. The famous Torah commentator Rashi says, that "Yaakov lives forever" - it appeared to them that he died, but he was alive.

The Rebbe explains: If the Torah promises that something exists, even if it is not perceived by the human eye, this does not change the fact of the actual existence of that thing. On the contrary, since the Torah says it exists, its existence is a com-

pany - more so than a thing seen by the eye. Since a thing seen by the eye can be a mere illusion. However, when the Torah gives evidence to the existence of something, it is there without question.

In the writings of the famous Torah mystic Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (known as the Arizal) it is stated that before Moshiach is finally revealed, he will be hidden away in a similar fashion to that of Moshe (Moses) when he went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. The people were divided into thinking that he died, but he really was alive and later came back down with the Ten Commandments. Furthermore, according to the Arizal, there is a tremendous advantage in the apparent passing of Moshiach as compared to the aforementioned passing of Yaakov. Regarding Moshiach it is added, that not only he does not really die, but that when Moshiach will be completely revealed and all the Jews will recognize him and will gather around him.

The Talmud states also that Moshiach can be someone who was already in the world and it seems that he died. The late Chofetz Chaim, scholar Rabbi Aaron Solovitchik, a widely known authority in the ruling of Torah law, published just a few years ago, and it appeared in Jewish American newspapers, that even in light of what happened to the Lubavitcher Rebbe after the 1st of Tammuz, "accor-

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Shmuel and Yaakov

In memory of
their beloved mother
Ervka bas Tera
29 Tammuz 5762

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and asked Shlomo, "What does it say on your kippa?"

Shlomo said, "It's the proclamation of Yechi Adoneinu in honor of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach."

"Do you really believe that?" asked the man.

Shlomo said, "Of course. After the miracle the Rebbe did for me, I have no doubt that he is Moshiach."

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