

Everything in its Time

Category: Bereishis, Vayishlach

Chabad just opened up a new country - Zambia. Or did it?

From Alaska to Zambia

In the coming days, a young couple will be leaving Crown Heights to establish a Chabad center in a new country: Zambia.

Rabbi Mendy and Rivky Hertzel both grew up as Shluchim; he is from the Golan Heights, and she is from Anchorage, Alaska. Together, they chose to go spread Judaism in remote Lusaka — the capital of Zambia. There are two local Jewish communities, one English-speaking community and one Hebrew-speaking community.

As they prepared to make the move, someone mentioned to Rabbi Hertzel that there was a Chabadnik living in Crown Heights named Yerachmiel Glazer, who actually grew up in Zambia! And as it turns out, Chabad had been in Zambia over fifty years ago!

This is his story:

The First Chabadnik in Zambia

Glazer was born in South Africa, and in the mid-1950s his parents — looking for business opportunities — chose to move to Ndola in Zambia, where they opened a typewriter shop. Ndola had a small Jewish community of some twenty families; there was no rabbi or kosher butcher, and one Sephardic Jew barely managed to organize a minyan on the holidays.

When Glazer turned eighteen in 1965, he asked his parents to send him to visit Israel; he wanted to see the miracle of the Jewish state with his own eyes. Like many tourists, he decided to volunteer on a kibbutz, and somehow he fell into the religious kibbutz of Ein Zurim near Kiryat Malachi.

Suddenly he discovered a whole new world; he saw synagogues, Jews praying

every day, and a whole gamut of Jewish observance. He really wanted to fit in, but he discovered that he didn't know enough to participate. He had never even attended a Hebrew school; he had practically no Jewish background.

He sent a letter to the Israeli office of the Jewish Federation of Central and South Africa, telling them that he was interested in studying Judaism in a yeshiva and asking for their assistance. The official in Tel Aviv opened the letter and did not know what to do with it, when suddenly, by Divine Providence, a Chabadnik walked into the office; it was Rabbi Avraham Lison of Kfar Chabad, who would occasionally visit the office on his rounds of strengthening Yiddishkeit.

The official handed Lison the letter, and he immediately expressed his willingness to invite Glaser to Kfar Chabad. It was right before Passover, so Lison invited him for the holiday and he ended up staying there for much longer. He fit perfectly into the Yeshivah; it was exactly the environment he was looking for.

At the time, he was such a novelty that articles were written about the "18-year-old secular boy from Zambia" who was studying Torah at Kfar Chabad. He remained there for two and a half years, and then, for Tishrei of 5729-1968, he decided to visit the Rebbe and continue his studies in 770. When he arrived, he wrote to the Rebbe about his plans, and to his surprise, the Rebbe replied that he should return to Israel to continue his studies in Kfar Chabad.

After the uplifting experience of the holidays in the Rebbe's presence, he had the privilege of entering the Rebbe's office for a private audience. In the note he gave the Rebbe, he wrote about his Zambian background and about his plans to continue his studies at Kfar Chabad. To his surprise, the Rebbe suddenly looked up and said to him, "I would like you to return to Zambia and spread Judaism there."

He was shocked. "But the Rebbe told me before the holidays to continue my studies in Kfar Chabad! I have a flight in a few hours!"

The Rebbe pondered for a few seconds and said, "Go back to Kfar Chabad, but initiate a correspondence with the Jewish communities in Zambia. Write to them occasionally about the holidays — for example, Chanukah, which is approaching, and ask them to hang the letters on the bulletin board in the synagogues."

He returned to Israel and followed the Rebbe's instruction. He began

corresponding with the Jews in Zambia and received very warm responses from them.

After nearly half a year in Kfar Chabad, he received a letter from his father asking him to return to Zambia and join the family business. He asked the Rebbe's advice, and the Rebbe wrote to him: "Fulfill your parents' request to visit them for several months, and use this opportunity to spread Judaism, especially regarding the practical observance of mitzvot."

He returned to Zambia and began to teach Judaism. At the beginning of his stay, he received a call from Rabbi Yosef Weinberg, who would travel every year to South Africa. Rabbi Weinberg shared that when Glazer was studying in Kfar Chabad, he had visited Zambia where he had met Glazer's father and gotten to know all the members of the community. He added that the Rebbe ordered him to call and find out if Glazer had everything he needed for Jewish life in Zambia. He was basically the Rebbe's man in Zambia.

He remained in Zambia for almost a year and was very successful in enlivening the Jewish community. But then, the political situation in Zambia started to deteriorate and it became difficult to do business, and his father decided it was time to return to South Africa. They asked the Rebbe, and the Rebbe agreed to the move. That, essentially, is when his mission in Zambia came to a close.

53 years have passed, and now, the Rebbe's wish has come true: Zambia will have Jewish life once again.

The Rebbe once said that the wish of a righteous person always comes true. Sometimes it takes time, and sometimes it happens after he is no longer in a physical body; as King Solomon says in Koheles, "He made everything right in its proper time" (3:11). Nonetheless, every good thing will for sure have its moment.

Why Didn't Revelation Happen Earlier

On Tuesday of this week, we will mark Yud Tes Kislev, the Rosh Hashanah for Chassidism. It's the day when the Alter Rebbe was released from prison in Czarist Russia and when the government legitimized the Chassidic movement and allowed it to function. Since then, this day has been celebrated all over the world.

Many people ask: if Chasidism is so important and so integral to the survival of the Jewish people, why was it revealed just 300 years ago? Why didn't we have it earlier?

In truth, this question could also be asked about the Kabbalah; if the mystical elements of Judaism are so important, why were they only revealed 1000 years ago? It can also be asked about the Talmud; after all, there was a time — for example, in the era of the prophets — when the Jewish people did not have access to those teachings either.

Really, this question can be asked about the Torah itself. The Torah was given to us 3334 years ago. Adam and Eve were created 2450 years earlier. Why did G-d wait so long before giving them His most important book of wisdom?

The answer is, "everything has a proper time" (Koheles 1:3). G-d created the world such that every special revelation requires preparation. Only He knows which generation and which era is most appropriate for which revelation.

We find this idea in the story of Jacob our forefather. Jacob experienced obstacles and trials and tribulations at every step of his life. His goals were not easy to achieve, and they didn't occur exactly as he planned they would. Nonetheless, they all took place — when the time was right.

For example, Jacob was destined to marry Rachel and give birth to Joseph, who would be the leader of the next generation. It took a long time for that to happen. First, his father-in-law forced him to marry Leah. Then, Rachel experienced childlessness. Then, when Joseph was finally born, his brothers rejected his leadership and even sold him into slavery. But ultimately, Joseph reached the position of second to the king and was accepted by his brothers as their father's spiritual successor.

We find a similar story within this week's Torah portion: after the Torah describes his dramatic encounter with his brother Esau, it says that Jacob "arrives complete to the city of Sh'chem." What does 'complete' mean to add?

Rashi explains that it means three things:

1. He was of complete health, for his limp was healed. At the beginning of this Torah portion, Jacob wrestles with an Angel and hurt his thigh. But

now, it was healed.

2. He was financially complete. He had given a very considerable gift to Esau in an attempt to buy his favor, and G-d ensured that he recovered his entire loss within a short time.
3. He was complete in his Torah study. The 22 years he spent in Laban's house did not cause him to forget the teachings he had received from his father. The Rebbe noted that in the third case, he didn't just recover something that was lost, as was the case with his health and financial state. Instead, he never lost his Torah study in the first place.

Don't Push

What is the message here?

Often, parents attempt to convince their children to do something specific, whether it is to study a specific subject in college, or to push them to be the best in a certain sport, and so on. Sometimes, this becomes an obsession; the parent tries to correct his own failures through the achievements of his children. I've heard from a number of lawyers that they don't actually enjoy their profession; they studied law only to fulfill their parents' ambitions.

The same is true of marriage. Parents drive their children crazy to get married, and are constantly trying to set them up with one person or another. Obviously, one should encourage their children and help them, but at the end of the day, everything happens in its proper time. Don't push; it will happen when G-d determines that it's the right moment.