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**In This Issue:**

**Chabad – An Important Branch of Modern Judaism p. 1**  
**Making the Blind to See – Israeli Technological Advances p. 3**  
**Save a Child's Heart: A Child from Syria p.5**  
**Baruch's Biography, continued p.6**  
**Ministry and Family News p. 8**

**Chabad – An Important Branch of Modern Judaism**

**The History of the Movement**

**Chabad**, perhaps the best known branch of Hasidism and perhaps the most powerful Jewish organization in the world, was founded in Russia at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its name is an acronym in Hebrew for **wisdom, understanding, knowledge**. In a thousand cities around the world, including hundreds of towns and suburbs in the United States, Chabad is the only visible Jewish presence, attracting tens of thousands of secular Jews who have no alternative spiritual or educational framework. Unrelenting Chabad energy has not only revitalized moribund communities; in many places, especially in Eastern Europe, it has also wiped out all other brands of Jewish religious life.



**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson**

Chabad has had only seven leaders, the last of whom was **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson**. He was appointed in 1951 and died in 1994, but his image continues to be the engine that drives Chabad. In Crown Heights, Brooklyn, where he lived, his portrait is everywhere, in the form of oil paintings, prints, framed photographs, even in a format suitable for infants' cradles. In Israel it is publicized on gigantic billboards.

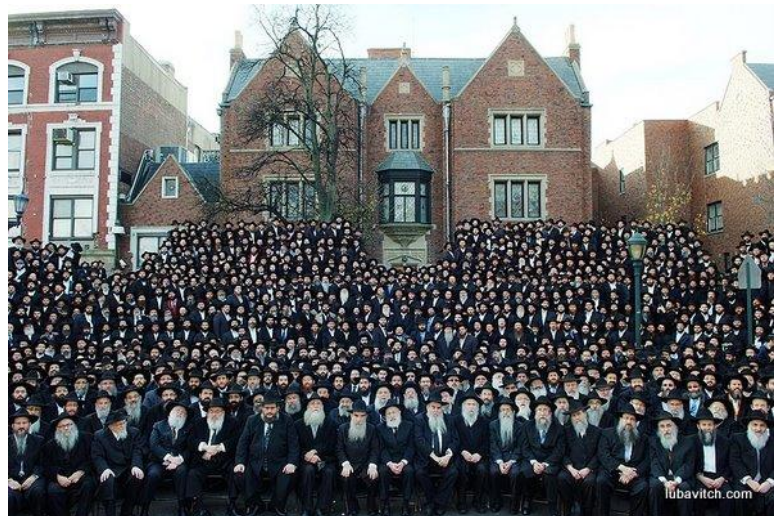
Schneerson infused the movement with increasing messianic tension, which vaulted into an ecstatic spiral from the 1980s until his death, as he intimated that he himself was destined to be revealed as **King Messiah**. During this period, he and the movement became anathema to orthodox (Haredi) leaders who viewed Chabad as a cult and accused Schneerson of heresy and idolatry. There is still one branch of Chabad, called *meshichistim*, that refuses to believe Rabbi Schneerson died in 1994, and await his return to be crowned as Messiah King.

The latest Rabbi, one of the great charismatic leaders of Hasidism in the 20th century, is the spiritual descendant of **Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad**. Immanuel Etkes of the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History has drawn attention to the origins of the Movement with his social history of Rabbi Zalman, focusing on the social circumstances that determined his worldview and behavior, how he ascended to leadership, and the battles he fought within the movement. Etkes describes Schneerson as a spiritual giant and a charismatic leader, an educator dedicated to leading his followers, who viewed himself as an emissary of the Jewish people on earth and in heaven. In this sense, the latest Rebbe was a spiritual descendant of the founder of the movement, taking his ideas to unprecedented heights.

### The Present

In recent years **the Chabad movement has become a global force**, exercising dramatic influence on the Jewish world - mainly outside Israel - with bases in 76 countries and some 4,000 shlichim - literally "sent ones," or "emissaries" - not counting their accompanying families. Chabad is certainly the most missionary minded of all Jewish sects, aiming to reach every Jew everywhere, regardless of their lifestyle or beliefs. Adherents vie for the privilege of establishing and running Chabad Centers around the world, part of a global network.

Although all such centers are subordinate to the **World Headquarters in Brooklyn**, they exercise considerable autonomy. Each shaluach receives a grant to establish a 'Chabad House' in the town or country to which he is sent. It is up to him to raise the funds necessary for ongoing activity, thus ensuring that if the world institutions of Chabad collapse, the network would not be affected. These enterprising young couples have succeeded in many cases in raising millions for the erection and running of Jewish centers, schools and kindergartens.



Chabad is **typically welcoming to all kinds of Jews** – Orthodox and non-observant, offering an enticing Judaism that is comforting, superficially tolerant, open-minded and relatively enlightened that embraces serving God with joy.

### Chabad's Mission

The emissaries are ever mindful that they are representatives of "the Rebbe". As one of them explained, "What is the strength of an emissary? It is the Rebbe's strength. We are on a mission of behalf of **the exalted one of the generation, of the Messiah** of this generation. The Rebbe draws his powers from the infinite. "

Mumbai, India (formerly known as Bombay) is a favorite spot for Israeli backpackers. The Chabad House there provided them with a sense of home away from home. Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife, Rivka, who ran the center, were young and idealistic, not long married and parents to a little boy not yet out of diapers. In a **savage attack in 2011** by Muslim extremists, the rabbi and his wife were murdered. Their little son was rescued by his courageous and quick thinking Indian nanny, who risked her life to save his. She remains by his side now in Israel, where he lives with his grandparents.

The shluachim continue to receive guidance throughout their missions. The global headquarters, by way of annual conferences and constant inspiration, provides support to an isolated shaluach and his family, often the only religious Jews in the locale of their mission. At the same time, the shaluach is to a great degree on his own. His children grow up in a non-religious and non-Jewish environment, often in the absence of suitably orthodox educational institutions. Chabad invests a great deal in the "emissaries' young ones," creating online schools for them, where studies are conducted in Hebrew and English.

Many in the movement today are unhappy with the direction taken. They believe Chabad has become overly tolerant of those who do not keep Jewish traditional religious practices, turning a blind eye to those who drive on Shabbat. To their mind, this is tantamount to relinquishing the movement's original task to prepare the Jewish people for the coming of Messiah. Others claim that the movement has lost its former intellectual roots of profound learning. Also evident are disputes regarding the role of the emissaries and the central place they now hold in the movement.

Today Chabad lacks a living, unifying father figure to take the helm. Beneath the surface, there are **many different factions**; the split between the messianists, who believe Schneerson is the Messiah, and the pragmatists who deny such a claim is festering; there is growing resentment against the emissary 'elite'. The conflicting aims of right-wing Israeli politics, worldwide Jewish education and identity, Torah observance and Orthodox exceptionalism could very well tear the movement apart.

### **Making the Blind to See – Israeli Technological Advances**

New technology developed at Bar-Ilan University may **enable people who are blind from birth to see** with the help of a bionic contact lens. The technology is still being tested and awaits approval for clinical trials.

We have always been told that people born blind will never be able to see. But Israelis have become used to saying '**never say never**'. While at times aggravating to a westerner, this attitude nevertheless has placed Israel at the helm of the world high-tech industry, and at the forefront of modern technology.

How does it work? A tiny camera implanted in the eye receives visual information from the environment and transmits signals to a bionic contact lens. The lens passes the signals via electrodes to the cornea and from there to sensory brain areas, bypassing the retina, generating a stimulus that simulates visual information. **No surgery is required**, and no damage is caused to other vital senses or organs, according to the head of the research team, Prof. Zeev Zalevsy.

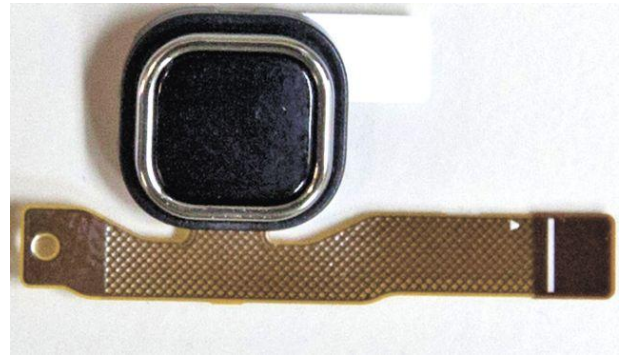


The **bionic eye** itself is not a new idea, but until now the technology has been of little help to those who are **congenitally blind**. It is invasive, requiring surgery, and depends on the stimulation of brain areas that process sight, which is developed in childhood. The technology, which bypasses the retina, is intended for those who suffer from retinal degeneration and is of no help to those born blind. Furthermore, the visual resolution in existing bionic eyes is about 16 pixels, compared to a million pixels in a normal eye. Until now, people with bionic eye implants have been able to distinguish between light and darkness or shadow, but not to see objects clearly or to read.

The new Israeli technology means that **even a person who is blind from birth will be able to see.**

It consists of a tiny camera with an image compressor and an electric signal amplifier located outside the patient's body, which can be attached to his eye glasses or cellular device. By means of an encoding technique, the pixels are compressed and visual information is transmitted to a similar level of the sight of a healthy person. The bionic contact lens will have some 10,000 tiny electrodes enabling

cornea stimulation without coming into direct contact with the cornea. The stimuli are passed from the cornea via the nervous system to the various brain regions that process visual information. According to Prof. Zalevsky the new technology is like "a Braille lens that **enables blind people to see** in a way similar to Braille reading".



### Algae From the Desert



Dr. Ami Ben Amotz, then a student at the Weizmann Institute of Science, was serving many years ago in the Israeli army reserves near Lake Bardawil on the northern coast of the Sinai Peninsula. Intrigued by the **orange algae** covering part of the lake he decided to take samples back with him for analysis at the Institute. The unicellular algae turned out to be very **rich in the anti-oxidant 9-cis beta-carotene.**

One of Ben Amotz's students, Dr. Avi Shaish, continued the research. Michael Belkin, director of the Sheba ophthalmic technologies lab, decided to study the anti-oxidant's effectiveness against retina degeneration. The head of the retinal research lab at Sheba, Dr. Yigal Rotenstreich, made pills out of a concentrated powder from the algae. It was first tested on seven patients suffering from night blindness. Following 90 days of treatment, there was **considerable improvement** in their night vision and in the electrical performance of the retina.

It has now been discovered that the powder produced from the algae, *dunaliella bardawil*, can help Retinitis pigmentosa. This is a degenerative disease that causes blindness at a young age. Until now there was **no known treatment for this disease**, which is the second most common cause of blindness in children and occurs in one out of every 3500 births in Israel. In the study, 30 patients with retinitis pigmentosa received treatment for 90 days, some with the algae powder and some with a placebo. Then the treatments were switched, with those who had been given the placebo taking the algae pills, and vice versa. Neither the patients nor their doctors knew who was being given what, and when.

The results were encouraging. Some 34 percent of the patients experienced a **significant improvement in their field of vision and electrical retina response.** Some experienced as much as a quadrupling of their field of vision, with no significant side effects. The findings have been published online by Dr. Yigal Rotenstreich and his colleagues at the Sheba Medical Center in JAMA Ophthalmology .

Encouraged by the findings so far, Sheba has launched another, broader and lengthier clinical

trial to determine whether the algae can prevent blindness, and how it interacts with the various genetic mutations that cause retinitis pigmentosa. **The algae is also being studied** as a possible treatment for other conditions including psoriasis, high cholesterol and diabetes. The algae is now being **specialy grown in Eilat** by a Japanese-owned firm in an effort to increase the content of its active ingredients, Rotenstreich said.

### Save a Child's Heart

There seems to be nothing unusual about the house at the end of a quiet street in Azur, near Tel Aviv, Israel with its well kempt garden and green gate. But this house is a place of hope and comfort for children and their families from all over the world. Serving as the hospitality home of *Save a Child's Heart (SACH)*, the house has been home to babies and mothers from Africa, Eastern Europe, China, the Palestinian Authority (West Bank), Gaza and, recently, even Syria.



One of the 18 Chinese children designated by the Israel Embassy in Beijing for heart surgery in Israel, 2010, to celebrate 18 years of cooperation with China

The **non-profit organization** was founded in Israel in 1995 by a surgeon at Wolfsson Medical Center in Holon, Israel, to provide needy children from all over the world with heart surgery. So far **3,200 children from 44 different countries** have been treated. Simon Fisher, the executive Director of SACH, explains that their aim is to contribute the medical care first and foremost to children 'in our neighborhood', in the belief that this will bring people closer, breaking down stereotypes and preconceptions. Treatment is offered free; bills are paid from donations received.

A recent article published on the CNN reports a small miracle – from the midst of the violence rampant in Syria, a country at war with Israel, a little child's life was saved by Israeli doctors in an Israeli hospital. The child's identity is withheld because her family is liable to be branded traitors or spies if it were known they had visited an 'enemy state.'

When a baby, she was diagnosed with a **heart condition** that would kill her if left untreated. "We all have two pumps, but she has only one that is working," explained Dr. Sion Houri, the head of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Wolfsson. "We have two tubes in our body -- one going to the lung, one to the body. The one going to the lung was severely narrowed." Surgery was urgently needed, but no one in their home town was qualified to perform it, and the family could not afford to go elsewhere. The child's condition grew steadily worse. By the time she turned four she could no longer play, walk or even talk, and barely ate. Then war broke out and the family fled their hometown, landing in a refugee camp crowded with thousands like them -- an unsafe environment for a desperately ill child.

SACH heard of her plight and **arranged for her to be brought to Israel**, an almost miraculous feat in itself. A team of doctors and nurses at the Medical Center performed open-heart surgery -- a major operation but a relatively simple procedure that often produces amazing, immediate results.

"You can see differences that are absolutely mind-boggling. Children thought to be retarded all of a sudden start talking and walking; all they needed was a little bit of oxygen," Dr. Houri explained.

CNN reporters met the child three days after surgery. The change was noticeable. She was playing and smiling, and though hooked up to a machine she was more like a typical four-year-old than the sickly exhausted child she had been. In a year's time, she will need to undergo

one more surgical procedure to keep up with her bodily development, but the doctors are optimistic. For more on Save a Child's Heart, visit <http://www.saveachildsheart.org/>.

### **Baruch's Biography Continued**

*In the last instalment Baruch served as a senior medic during the 1980 war in Lebanon, while suffering from a mysterious and painful ailment that affected his mobility. He was released from active military service.*

### **Our Bookkeeper**

Having lost the office on Weismann Street, for a period we were forced into a situation in which the staff worked at home and I travelled between homes when coordination was needed. Finally, we found suitable office space in **Rishon LeTzion** and decided that the HaGefen offices would return to that city. We rented a number of rooms above a local bakery, and enjoyed the wonderful smells of baking wafting in our noses as we struggled to focus on translation, illustration, editing and correspondence.

We needed a dedicated bookkeeper. As I had never hired one before, I asked our Auditor to screen the candidates and refer to us those he deemed competent.

One such was Ilana, who conveniently lived a mere three blocks away from our new offices and was open to the part-time job we could offer. However, she was not a Christian and was **apprehensive** of working in a Christian environment. Our Auditor assured her she would not be forced to do anything against her will, that there would certainly not be any kind of religious coercion. Before accepting the position, Ilana made it clear: she did not want to spoken to concerning our faith, would not share in our morning devotions and had no interest in attending any of our social events if they had anything of a Christian nature.

I explained that **everything we do has a Christian nature**. Even our accounts are kept in the fear of God. However, she would be free not to attend our morning devotions, and I would inform the staff that they were not to address her with issues of faith. However, the door was always open, should she choose to enter.

And so it was. For months, Ilana remained in her room as we gathered for morning reading of Scripture and prayer. She would then be invited in to hear various notices and share in discussion regarding the work at hand. But her **curiosity was stirred**; she began eavesdropping on devotions, acting as if she had no interest but drinking in every word.

One day she approached me, "Would you mind if I joined the team in your devotions? I'm curious." Of course we did not mind. She was as free to attend, as she was not to do so, at any time. From that morning on, she never missed devotions.

Some months later, Ilana asked for the Gospel to be explained to her. After a few days, she announced that she had turned to the Lord. Within a short while she joined the church, was baptized, and has served HaGefen/CWI for many years as bookkeeper. She later also became the church's bookkeeper, in which capacity she continues to serve at the time of writing.

### **Patmos**

Murdo came to visit and reported that a **large Finnish organization, Patmos**, had made a contribution to CWI's work in Israel and expressed its intention to support that part of CWI's outreach. Needless to say, I was delighted.

An extensive Finnish work already existed in Israel, under the auspices of the Finnish Lutheran Church. I knew many of the missionaries involved in that work well. When they heard that Patmos had indicated interest in our work, they warned us to steer away from that

organization. Their charges were that Leo Meller, who headed Patmos, had been found guilty of double accounting; and that he had divorced his wife to marry another.

I contacted Murdo and informed him of these charges. I made it clear that I was unwilling to accept the support of a body that was morally questionable. Of course, I did not know if the charges were true, and was willing to look into them if Patmos was open to such a possibility. Otherwise, I insisted, CWI Israel declined support from that body.

To my surprise and immense satisfaction, I received an invitation from Patmos to visit Finland at their expense to investigate the charges, and a promise of full cooperation. I travelled to Finland and was met at the Helsinki airport by **Miss Pirkko Huttanen**, an amazing woman and a senior staff member of Patmos, responsible for the Middle East. I was shown through the Patmos offices and introduced to their extensive work around the world.

Patmos has managed to maintain a thoroughly biblical tension between sincere, heartfelt social engagement in the countries where the organization works and an avid, consistent evangelistic commitment, working wherever possible through local churches in each country. Over the years, I have been impressed with their **high spiritual and moral standards**. But at that stage I knew nothing of what I know today.

I addressed Leo Meller with my concerns. He listened graciously, taking no offence. Here he was, the head of a prominent international organization, offering substantial financial support, being questioned by a young whipper-snapper of a minister whose work was the proposed recipient of that support. Leo replied with gentle candor, willing to be put further to the test:

Yes, he had instructed Patmos to run parallel accounts. They were involved in **smuggling printing presses and printing material to the Russian underground church**. Full and careful accounts of everything that had to do with this endeavor were kept and audited. However, these accounts were kept from the Finnish Authorities, because the Finnish Government was beholden to the Russians, and was likely to disclose information obtained from those accounts, had they gained access to them. He therefore chose to go to prison rather than provide the authorities with the accounts.

Yes, he was divorced and remarried. He had submitted both his remarriage and the issue of the double accounts to a body of senior Finnish churchmen, and they had affirmed him on both issues. I was welcome to meet and inquire with these men.

I was impressed by Leo's willingness to be questioned over such delicate matters and by the humble manner in which he responded to my questions. Our session ended with prayer and a hearty handshake. I informed Leo that I would be honored to receive support from an organization with such standards and such Christian conviction, and that I looked forward to many years of **fruitful fellowship** in the Gospel.

Over the years, Patmos has proven to be a **mainstay of the work** and a very faithful friend. The organization originally funded part of the work conducted by CWI, but its main interest was evangelistic and social activity. It established, equipped and funded a dental clinic that provided new immigrants with free needed dental care, all at great expense.

Patmos funded CWI and church staff, the production and publication of Sabbath School material in Hebrew, assisted in the funding of Grace and Truth's building project, helped fund the Modern Hebrew Bible project for youth and now helps to support my work since retirement on a regular, typically faithful and generous basis.

In the course of this time, I have had the privilege of Pirkko's friendship. She has won my admiration and respect for her humble courage, her broad vision and her gentle, Christ like spirit. Pirkko has suffered greatly from grievous illnesses, repeatedly risked her life for the Gospel where men have feared to go, and always maintained a truly happy attitude, trusting in God and seeking the interest of his kingdom.

On one occasion she proved her mettle when a senior official of the Jewish Agency insisted on Patmos choosing between working with them, or “with that infamous missionary, Baruch Maoz.” Many of the missionaries and missionary societies working in Israel, faced with similar choices, either withdrew or moderated their evangelistic engagement. Not so Patmos. Pirkko firmly refused to concede, and the official backed down. It has been an honor to work with Patmos, as well as a real delight.

### Avital’s Baptism

One Friday toward the end of 1991, Avital approached me. “Abba, I’m coming with you to church tomorrow.” Almost a year had passed since she had attended church. I was as thrilled as I was surprised. “What has made the difference?” I asked. “Nothing, I just want to come.” A few weeks later she requested baptism.

I suggested she wait. Soon she would complete High School and then enlist to fulfill her mandatory military duty. Perhaps it would be better for her to wait until she had served at least a significant part of her term in the military, facing the challenges, temptations and appeals of the unbelieving world, before undergoing baptism. She should want to be sure that her professed faith was true faith, the product of conviction and not of her desire to identify with her parents at a time they had become, once again, the object of public disapproval on the part of the Orthodox.

No. She insisted on being interviewed by the Elders and so, with some reticence, I conveyed her request, expressed my concerns and invited the Elders to meet with her. Following the interview, it was decided that Avital would be **admitted to baptism** after completing the pre-baptismal course required of all baptismal candidates and then be subject to re-confirmation. At the end of the process, with some hesitation on my part, the date of my daughter’s baptism was set. It was a sweet, happy occasion. For lack of a building and of a baptistery, the church travelled north to Galilee, where we conducted a worship service beside Lake Galilee and baptized a number of new believers, Avital among them.

### Ministry and Family News

I have completed **teaching the Introduction to Systematic Theology** class and now await receipt of the exams and of the papers. Each student has a 3-hour exam to take, and then must present a paper on an agreed subject of theological research. I admit: I enjoyed teaching the class. The students were attentive and eager, and the topic - - the whole gamut of the Gospel - is heart-warming. We closed with a discussion of eschatology, and saw afresh what glories the Lord has prepared for himself, and what kindness yet await those who are in Christ. I will be fine-tuning the lessons in light of what I’ve learned from the student’s remarks, and then the material will be published - **Israel’s first Systematic Theology**. Barely what we need - a far more thorough discussion of each point. But what I hope will be a helpful beginning.

I also completed **the first draft of the Gospel of Matthew** in limited vocabulary Hebrew and have commenced working on Mark. Meanwhile, I am translating my Hebrew commentary on Micah into English in preparation for seminars **on the Book of Micah** that I will be giving, God willing, at a number of locations in the course of our **oncoming visit to the USA**. Bracha is scheduled to leave for the US on July 12 and I on August 1. I expect to return, Lord willing, on November 13 and Bracha 5 days later. Keith and Shlomit are planning to come with their children.

In the course of the US trip, we will be holding a week-long family reunion in Oregon on occasion of my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. God willing, our trip in the US begins in Cleveland OH, whence we drive to Seattle WA and then east again (after the week of Oregon) to Flint, MI, thence to Vienna VA, Atlanta GA, Birmingham AL, Phoenix AZ, Los Angeles CA, and back to Seattle WA.

Obviously, there are many locations where we will be stopping on the way. Our trusted Kia Soul has done us good service and reduced our costs considerably.

Our family are all well. **Eran (Avital's husband)** has just lost his mother, because of which event he was in Israel twice over the last 8 weeks. His elderly father is being cared for by Eran's brother and sister, both living nearby. Otherwise, all things are normal.

We thank you for your prayers and implore you to continue praying for us. Please remember the extended drive we will be making, and ask God's blessing on the ministry of his word.

In Christ by wonderful grace,

Baruch



TAX-deductible **support for our ministry** should be written to the order of **Berean Baptist church, P.O.Box 1233, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48480-3233**. Direct bank transfers may be made to **Franklin Bank, 24725 West Twelve Mile Road, Southfield, MI 48034 USA, Routing Number 241271957 Berean Baptist Special Account No. 567495976**. Please inform **Mr. Craig Cooper** of the details of the transaction (date, transaction number and sum) at [coopmobile31@gmail.com](mailto:coopmobile31@gmail.com)

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Funds sent for the ministry will be used exclusively for that purpose.

We reserve the right to use for the ministry funds sent for personal use.