



The Awareness Center, Inc.

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Case of Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel

Monsey, NY

Neve Yohoshua - New York, NY

Neve Zion - Jerusalem, Israel

The past tradition in handling sex crimes was for the local rabbis to handle "situations" quietly within their own communities. What usually happened was the alleged offender would have no choice but to move to a new community.

In the case of Ben Zion Sobel, there were never any police reports made, which meant there was never any official criminal investigation.

A rabbi who wishes to remain anonymous has stated:

"Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel is one of the most notorious pedophiles he has ever known. Leaving hundreds of boys he has victimized."

"At one point Rabbi Shach made a rabbinic decree stating that Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel could NEVER teach again."

"Ben Zion has left survivors in both the United States and Israel. His modus operandi was extremely violent and barbaric."

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- Allegations of child sexual abuse were made against Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel at Neve Yehoshua which was later called Neve Tzion.

1987

- Rabbi Sobel was "pushed out " of Neve Yehoshua (later called Neve Tzion) after a multitude of serious allegations were made against him of emotionally, physically and sexually abusing his students, which were mostly male.

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Rabbi Yosef Blau on Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel

September 8, 2006

The professionals that I have consulted all say that treatment of repeated sexual offenders has not been successful. The risk in allowing such an individual to return to teaching is too great. We have a responsibility to protect the students. Only Hashem can measure sincerity of teshuva and the individual has every right to make a living in another area of work.

My knowledge of what occurred at Neve Tzion in 1985 comes from my work at Yeshiva University. I have been visiting yeshivos in Israel for YU since 1979. Among the yeshivos that I spoke at, was Neve Yehoshua which became Neve Tzion. During the crisis I was in contact with a number of people who were involved, including the rabbi who brought the accusations to Rabbi (Elya) Svei's attention. A number of former students in Neve were in YU and I tried to work with them. Then and later I maintained an ongoing relationship with both rabbonim who taught there and alumni.

Unfortunately, some of the key figures have passed away or are no longer well, and there was no documentation. The story of the scandal was kept out of the media.

Yosef Blau

Ben Zion Sobel

The following information was supplied by Levy Ford and a few rabbis whom wish to remain anonymous.

July 30, 2006

Ben Zion Sobel was originally from Monsey, New York. In the mid nineteen-eighties Sobel ran a yeshiva for "at risk youth" called Neve Yehoshua, which later moved to Israel and became Neve Zion.

Throughout history one of the common traditions in dealing with allegations of sex crimes against children has been to chase the alleged offender out of town. This is exactly what happened in the case of Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel. He left New York only to recreate himself in Israel.

In 1987, Rabbi Sobel was "pushed out " of Neve Yehoshua after a multitude of serious allegations were made against him of emotionally, physically and sexually abusing his students, which were mostly male.

There were also reports that many of Sobel's student-victims gave up on Judaism and there was at least one of his victims committed suicide.

One of Sobel's traditions was to expel students who complained. After the allegations were made public, Ben Zion Sobel did not leave his yeshiva willingly or quietly.

There were several rabbis who were well aware of the allegations, and actually provided counseling to Sobel's victims. Yet no one ever reported the allegations of child molestation to the proper authorities.

Both Rabbi Ben Tzion Kokis (Mashgiach Ruchani of Yeshivas Ohr Somayach of Monsey, NY) along with Rabbi Yeshua Liff (current dean of Yeshiva Ner Yaakov) taught at Neve Yehoshua. Once they were aware of the allegations and witnessed Ben Zion's inappropriate and abusive behavior they did what ever they could to pushed

for his removal. Rabbi Kokis believed the allegations that his students disclosed to him. He had more faith in them, then he had with Rabbi Sobel.

Rabbi Kokis took the matter to [Ha Rav ElyaSvei](#) (Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia - Philadelphia, PA). It's also important to note that Rabbi Svei also filed the original complaint regarding back in the 1980's regarding the case of [Rabbi Matis Weinberg](#) at Kerem Yeshiva in Santa Clara, CA. Eventually they both Kokis and Liff left the yeshiva.

One anonymous rabbi stated:

Sobel was known to be extremely charismatic. He combined being hip with being frum. Sobel was also known to be able to reach kids no one else was able to reach. "He specialized in troubled kids". "Looking back, he had all the signs of a sexual predator." "He was able to help some kids turn their lives around, yet there was a vast number in which he abused.

Soon after Ben Zion Sobel was fired, he claimed that he had done teshuva (repentance) and spent thousands of dollars getting psychiatric help.

There have always been questions if Sobel actually received any sort of psychiatric help. If he actually receive treatment was it conducted by a licensed mental health professional who has the education, training and experience to work with sexual predators? If it was, would this therapist sign an affidavit stating that Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel was NO LONGER a danger to children?

There is also the question if Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel ever paid restitution to his victims for all the pain and suffering they have endured? And would Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel agree to go back to the United States to face criminal charges for the sex crimes he committed there?

According to a rabbi who wishes to remain anonymous:

"The people I trust in Israel -- none of them trust Sobel at all. Rabbi Yitzchak Dovid Grossman would not be the first person to be taken in by someone who's said he's done teshuva."

"Sobel is good at this stuff. They're all good at this stuff. If they weren't good at it, they'd be long gone."

A few examples of unsuspecting individuals trusting alleged offenders include the cases of [Rabbi Mordechai Gafni](#), [Rabbi Matis Weinberg](#) and [Rabbi Mordecai Tandler](#).

According to another rabbi who wish to remain anonymous:

Rabbi Grossman believes that Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel has done teshuva and makes sure that he is far away from any contact with children. He is NOT involved in the camp. He sits in an office hundreds of miles away from any child.

Another anonymous rabbi who wishes to remain anonymous rabbi stated

"Sobel is a big Torah scholar, the equal of anyone in Los Angeles, and as far as we can tell, his behavior over the past 18 years has been above reproach."

"After losing his Rosh yeshiva position in 1987, Sobel got a number of jobs in Jewish publishing, including with Feldheim Publishers. He's tried to get out of the book business but I do not know of him teaching kids in the past 19 years. He has tried to get back into the teaching Torah business".

You can sign up for parsha lessons from Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel on line. Various people tried to stop this, yet were not successful.

According to Levy Ford

Rabbi Matis Weinberg has withstood allegations of sexual misconduct. He displays unbelievable arrogance while Sobel appears to have done genuine repentance. Matis is convinced he's beyond reproach. He's smart and twisted.

According to Levy Ford A reliable source writes to him on May 22, 2006:

But how come you have nothing on the worst offender of all time, Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel, who convinced Itri Yeshiva to open a yeshiva for wayward American students for him in Neve Yehoshua, which he famously used to serially sodomize perhaps 30 or more victims? Then it turned out he had done it before in Baltimore as well, but since he was a "rosh yeshiva" they couldn't just leave him without a job, so they gave him a cushy position at Feldheim Publications, apparently, while many of his victims, who were not gay (shows you the power of seduction) had to be institutionalized when the story broke. The yeshiva did renounce him and reopen as Neve Zion in Jerusalem.

The guy they found him cuddling with was his driver.

[Before Rabbi Baruch Lanner got busted] NCSY [had] the operative standard "make the girls fall in love with you so that they'll become religious."

Another e-mail to Levy Ford in early 2006:

There is a piece about Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel which has very little truth to it. I happen to know the man personally. He has absolutely no links to Mattis Weinberg, whatsoever, and never did. He does not even come from Baltimore. No one committed suicide because of him. He never claimed to be beyond reproach, although he is a big Torah scholar who has given sacrificially to help hundreds - perhaps thousands - of students around the world.

It is to his credit that he left quietly and quickly in 1985 because of his unfortunate problem. He immediately went into intense therapy and spent thousands of dollars for treatments.

After about half a year, his doctor signed a document for the Bidatz, saying that he was cured. He then underwent a very intense teshuvah process, assigned to him by the greatest Rabbis and Mekubalim of the generation (I think he's still involved in teshuvah things like fasting and the like).

It has been 20 years since then and I know that he is being watched very carefully. If he had done anything wrong since then, we would surely know about it. Although he has been given written permission from the Bidatz and other great Rabbis to return to teaching, he has not yet done so. He wants to be 1000% sure that he is not a hazard for anyone.

I don't think it is fair to him or his family to publicize now, 20 years after the scandal, what happened then - especially using wrong information. He poses no threat to anyone and he and they have suffered enough for his mistakes.

The Torah commands us to accept the ba'al teshuvah (see Rambam, Hilchos Talmud Torah 4,1) and without teshuvah we all are lost. I believe that that when a Jew has a problem, it is very easy to just kill him and rid the world of the problem. But the Torah wants us to help that person overcome his problem and continue to live and benefit the world with his good qualities.

Sometimes publicity is beneficial, but in this case, at this point, I think it is wrong. Whenever people search for his name on Google (he writes very inspiring Torah on the Net and many people are benefiting from him in this, safe way), some degrading lines from Protocols pop up and stare them in the face.

Levi Ford call another source who believes that Rabbi Sobel has done teshuva (repentance).

"What do you do with a guy who's smart, talented and believes he should not be near kids? Feldheim is a private publisher. They stuck him in a room and made him an editor. Does Rabbi Sobel have a right to support his family? Would it be better for him to be a cab driver picking people up at random?"

"Years ago, Aish HaTorah hired him to do research. He wasn't teaching kids."

Parsha Shavuah Shiur with HaRav Ben Zion Sobel

March 12, 2001

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RBS/message/503>

Pnei Shmuel is pleased to announce the popular, topical Shiur by HaRav Ben Zion Sobel, Shlitah

Tonight, Monday night at 8:15 pm.

At Pnei Shmuel

Nachal Refaim 21/1, Ramat Beit Shemesh.

The Rav comes to Ramat Beit Shemesh especially from Ramot, Yerushalayim to enlighten us with deeper insights and understanding of the Parsha Shavuah, including aspects of Hashkofa and Mussar.

For details, contact Yechiel Lewis

A Night to Honor Israel

John Hagee Ministries - November 21, 2004

<http://www.jhm.org/honorisrael.asp>

On Sunday evening, November, 21, 2004, Cornerstone Church hosted the 24th Annual "A Night to Honor Israel." It was an evening packed with outstanding speakers and also music, with all of the focus being on support for Israel and the Jewish people.

In the Bible, God says, "I will bless those that bless you and curse those that curse you." Pastor Hagee gave a stirring address to encourage Christians in America and around the world to support Israel and the Jewish people. Pastor pointed out that Israel is the only nation on the face of the earth that God himself drew the boundaries for and that it was given to his people, the Jews, for all time. There is nothing the United Nations can do to change this fact. The choice is very clear, Christians can either choose to be a friend of Israel and please the Lord or be an enemy and offend God.

Pastor said that the first "A Night to Honor Israel" was held to show support to Israel after they bombed the Iraqi nuclear arsenal in 1981. It is clear today how necessary that action was, but at the time it was condemned by the international community. In 2004, with the Iranian Government proceeding with uranium enrichment, the United States and Christians throughout the world must voice our support for Israel and her right to protect her sovereignty.

God has protected Israel in the past and will continue that protection for ever. The root cause of madness in the Middle East, is not Israel's fault, but instead corrupt governments that allow radical Islamic religious leaders to preach hate.

Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg, of congregation Rodfei Sholom, prayed for protection of Israeli and American armed forces and that other religions of the world would preach peace and love.

The music of the evening was wonderful, which included Pastor Matthew Hagee singing "Y'Varech' Ch'Cha" and the Cornerstone choir and orchestra, under the direction of John Gross, presenting a patriotic musical salute to veterans and current members of both the U.S. armed forces and Israeli Defense Forces. Yael Ravia-Zadok, Consul General of Israel, brought special greetings and appreciation on behalf of her nation. She thanked Pastor Hagee for his support and pointed out that when Israel once again became a nation in 1948, it was created as a homeland for Jews to come from all over the world. She also said that the United States is Israel's greatest ally and that the two countries are united in times of peace or times of war.

Member Elect, Judge Ted Poe, U.S. House of Representatives spoke on how important it is to have a democratic elected partner in Israel and that he would work to ensure that America continues her support for Israel, remains strong, despite world opinion. He said the two countries must stand together on the war on terrorism and that we will not give up the fight until we are victorious. Poe also stated that Israel does not need to ask permission to defend itself. Terrorists are the enemies of all free nations of the world.

The keynote address of the evening was given by Gary Bauer, President of American Values and Republican presidential candidate in 2000. He said that when Pastor Hagee speaks, people in Washington listen because they know he is expressing the opinion of millions in the United States.

Bauer stated that all free people are enemies of the terrorists. Liberty comes from God and terrorists want to destroy us because we do not worship the same god as they do. Osama bin Laden does not believe that free people are willing to fight and persevere to remain free. We must all realize that terrorists continue to plot against us and that this evil must be confronted.

Giving up land will not satisfy the terrorists. The end of violence will not come in Israel until the Palestinian parents love their children more than they hate Israeli children. Peace will come when the Palestinian mourns for the loss of a child who was a suicide bomber and begin to teach their children to love all people, regardless of their religion.

Rabbi Daniel Lapin, President of Toward Tradition, said that the United States and Israel have many similarities. Both countries were founded on the understanding that prosperity comes from God. He described the relationship between Israel and the U.S. as much more than a friendship, more appropriately it is a brotherhood of destiny. Both countries share a common Father in heaven. He stated that America nurtures Israel's physical survival, but

that Israel nurtures America's spiritual survival. Pastor Hagee presented Nefesh B'Nefesh, a Jewish organization that brings North American Jews to Israel a check for \$250,000.

A \$1,000,000 check was presented to Migdal Ohr, which is a home in Israel to over 4,000 Jewish children. Rabbi Ben `Zion Sobel spoke of how each individual child is loved as much as the next and that they are all a family, in the true sense of the word.

Another \$1,000,000 check was presented to the United Jewish Communities for the Operation Exodus program, which brings Jews from all over the world to Israel. When the new pilgrims arrive in Israel, they go into an absorption center which provides food, shelter, education and job training until they are ready to go out on their own. In appreciation for the financial support through the years, an absorption center in Israel is being named in honor of John Hagee Ministries. Thank you partners around the world for making this possible!

Just in the last year, John Hagee Ministries has donated over \$2,535,000 in support of the Jewish people and over \$8,581,000 in the last eight years. Again this would not have been possible without your support!

After the ceremony, there was a wonderful reception in the Cornerstone Life Center for the hundreds of guests of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston. The guests enjoyed pasta, sushi and many wonderful desserts.

Overall it was a wonderful night. As Pastor Hagee says, "love is not what you say, love is what you do." The many guests in attendance expressed their appreciation for the event and the true love shown for the Jewish people. If you have not attended "A Night to Honor Israel" before, you owe it to yourself to make plans to attend next year's event which will mark the 25th annual celebration.

Until that time, remember to lift up the Jewish people and nation of Israel in prayer. Gary Bauer pointed out that anti-Semitism is alive in the world today, not just in the Middle East, but also in Europe and right here in America. God is watching to see what you will do when confronted with this evil.

Ask your pastor his position towards Israel and if it is anything less than complete support, find a new church! Remember that Israel and the Jewish people are the apple of God's eye and your position towards them will determine whether you enjoy God's abundant blessings or His curse.

**Israel's 'Disco Rabbi' brings meals, hope to children
Charity work helps some 6,000 immigrants and orphans find a life outside crime, drugs, and alcohol.**

By Amelia Thomas

The Christian Science Monitor - November 23, 2005

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1123/p14s01-lire.html>

MIGDAL HA'EMEK, ISRAEL - It's the beginning of the academic year at Migdal Ohr and 700 new students, all underprivileged Israeli children, are getting accustomed to life on the sprawling school campus in the middle of this dusty northern Israeli town. Meanwhile, in an office tucked away at one end of the campus, school founder Rabbi Yitzchak Dovid Grossman is hard at work.

As charity head, school principal, and chief rabbi, Grossman is trying to manage the needs of more than 6,000 underprivileged children in schools and orphanages throughout Migdal Ha'Emek, while also serving as the leading

spiritual adviser to the entire community. As if that weren't enough, with the Israeli economy struggling, Grossman faces government funding cuts and rapidly growing numbers of needy students that are testing the limits of this enormous humanitarian operation that he built from scratch.

Dance lessons

Grossman first arrived here in 1969. "I intended to stay for just a couple of months, volunteer, then go back," he says. At that time, he explains, Migdal Ha'Emek had become the biggest center for crime in Israel. There weren't enough schools, few jobs, and no social or leisure facilities. Many young people had turned to crime, drugs, and alcohol.

"When I arrived," Grossman recalls, "the only place I could find young people were in the town's discos. So I went there. Gradually they began to open up, to tell me about their lives and their problems. No one had ever asked them about their feelings, fears, and dreams before."

Grossman decided to stay, and he soon became known locally as the 'Disco Rabbi.' Befriending many young people, he learned that most had a close relative in jail.

Grossman believed he could prevent a new generation of children from entering a life of crime. Thus, Migdal Ohr (Tower of Light) was born. In 1973, Grossman opened his first junior high school for 18 local boys from broken homes. Today, Migdal Ohr's campuses occupy huge tracts of land in the hilltop town, with a teaching and social worker staff of roughly 800, 80 percent of whom are former Migdal Ohr pupils.

Of the 6,000 boys and girls attending one of Migdal Ohr's 18 schools and seven toddler day-care centers, 2,000 live permanently in the charity's dormitories, supported by a network of foster parents.

A model program

With violence rising at an alarming rate in Israeli schools and wider society, many educators and public institutions are now coming to learn from the successes of Migdal Ohr.

"Recently, 50 Israeli army officers were sent by the IDF Chief of Staff to learn how the rabbi is able to weave emotionally scarred, problematic children from varied ethnic backgrounds almost seamlessly into mainstream society," says Norma Balass of American Friends of Migdal Ohr in the USA. The army faces similar challenges in assimilating new soldiers who come from diverse backgrounds.

"Migdal Ohr's children are matriculating with much higher scores than the national average," Ms. Balass continues. "The schools are violence- and drug-free, despite the backgrounds of these children." With a graduation rate of 98 percent, the organization has had children go on to become doctors, lawyers, and even members of parliament.

Besides schools, Migdal Ohr also runs local social programs, adult education courses, and prisoner rehabilitation programs. "Our central kitchen produces 15,000 meals per day," says Grossman. The soup kitchen project is a good example of how Grossman aims to build relationships between Migdal Ohr's various programs. "The director of the soup kitchen," he explains, "is a successful graduate from our prisoner rehabilitation program, who came to work for us after serving his time in jail."

Less than 20 percent of Migdal Ohr-rehabilitated prisoners ever return to prison. Back at the school dorms, many of the children are orphans, some having arrived from poverty-stricken orphanages in the former Soviet Union. In a country increasingly polarized by racial intolerance, with a constant stream of new immigrants experiencing

prejudice and sometimes even violence, instilling the children with a sense of love is more vital than ever, Grossman says.

"The Israeli government is largely concerned with national security," he says, "so it's up to organizations like us to provide the social 'first aid' and integration young people desperately need." In Migdal Ohr, children are taught to be extremely culturally aware and tolerant.

"When the first Ethiopian immigrant children arrived here, the Moroccan children went out and bought candies with their own money, to welcome them. And when the Russian immigrants first arrived, the Ethiopian children did the same. The children are also 'on the job' as much as we are: The older children are taught to provide counseling for the younger ones and the new ones. This gives them a sense of responsibility, which is so important in today's selfish world."

Turbulent times

It's not all smooth sailing for Migdal Ohr. Recent budget cuts have led to a cut in government financing of the charity to the tune of \$4 million per year.

"We receive financing from a number of government departments," explains Rabbi Ben-Zion Sobel, executive director of Rabbi Grossman's Jerusalem office, "from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Welfare, and others. So we were on everyone's list when the budget cuts came through. We were afraid to answer the phone, and every letter began 'We regret to inform you.' "

The result is that Migdal Ohr, whose annual operating costs are roughly \$25 million, is relying more heavily than ever on its supporters around the world.

"But because of the crisis in the Israeli economy, more and more families are sinking below the poverty line, and are turning to Migdal Ohr for help. And 'no' isn't a word in Rabbi Grossman's vocabulary," says Rabbi Sobel. "He told me 'If I don't take these kids, they'll end up on the streets.' So on one hand, our financing's been cut, and on the other, we've just taken in 700 more needy kids,"

Grossman is, as ever, undaunted. "As soon as I finish one project, God gives me another one," he laughs. "The problems never stop, so the answers never stop.... But this is my *raison d'être* - to keep children from the streets."

Camp offers northerners respite from shelters

By ADINAH GREENE

Jerusalem Post - July 31, 2006

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1153292043772&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>

Children and their mothers from communities in the North have gone to summer camp to escape from the constant danger in their towns.

Rabbi Yitzhak Dovid Grossman, known as the Disco Rabbi, started the 10-day camp, initially for children to help lessen their trauma and get them out of the bomb shelters.

"He talked to psychiatrists and psychologists," said Rabbi Ben-Zion Sobel, assistant to Grossman. "They said, 'First, the danger is very real, very serious and something should be done and second, it's [camp] a great idea.'"

Although the camp was only supposed to last 10 days, it has continued beyond that. Grossman has received a 10-day extension and plans to run the camps until the war ends.

While it began with 1,500 children in four locations, currently there are around 5,000 people participating in nine locations in the middle of the country like Nehalim, Petah Tikva, Even Shmuel and Neveh Hertzog in Ashdod.

When the war started, Grossman traveled to the different bomb shelters at the border and throughout the North. The children had become very ill since they were so frightened, he said. Now, the children were happy.

"They are so happy, you can't believe it," said Grossman. "They say, 'You saved us.' To give you an example, when the children first arrived, they came over and said: 'Rabbi, bless us so we won't die.' Now they forget about the problems.

"To see the children so happy...It gives them life," he said.

The children are staying on the campuses of schools with dormitories that are currently closed for summer vacation. To help plan the children's activities and programs, counselors from different organizations have to come to help. A large portion of the counselors are graduates of Grossman's Midgal Ohr program, which helps young children from disadvantaged families.

Activities include arts and crafts, sports, swimming, hikes, educational programs and different types of entertainment. The children have also visited zoos and amusement parks.

The cost of running the camp - including food, housing, activities, transportation and fees - is \$150,000 a day, according to Grossman. The Jewish Agency has agreed to help cover a portion of the costs, but Grossman needs more to keep the camps functioning.

Aside from his work with the camps, Grossman continues to visit bomb shelters in the North, bringing with him different forms of entertainment to help cheer those inside.

The mothers who have come with their children reflect a mixture of happiness and worry, since many have left their husbands home and have other problems in mind.

"The mothers don't stop thanking me," he said. "On the one hand, they are upset because their husbands are still there [in the North], and they have problems with money and clothes. On the other hand, they stop, thank me and say: What would we do without you?"

Those wishing to donate or help can call the camp's Jerusalem office at 02-537-4337 and ask for Rabbi Ben-Zion or Rabbi Fogel.

WARNING TO PARENTS IN ISRAEL - Case of Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel

By Vicki Polin

The Awareness Center's Daily Newsletter - August 5, 2006

I've been told by an extremely reliable source that many years ago Rabbi Shach made a rabbinical decree stating "Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel should NEVER teach children". This decree was made after it was discovered that he had been molesting children.

According to my source Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel has a long history of pedophilia that goes back to the days he lived in the US. It is believed that he has molested hundreds of boys.

Considering these facts, and how well known the offenses are in the rabbinic world I find it shocking that Rabbi Sobel to find the following article in the Jerusalem Post. The article promotes a camp for children in Israel in which Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel is involved.

I have been told that Rabbi Yitzhak Dovid Grossman is totally aware of Ben Zion's past history, yet believes he has done "teshuva for his past transgressions. With all the choices of careers that Ben Zion could have, why does he choose to have one that is connected to children?

Unfortunately, I have not heard from any of those victimized by Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel. If you are one of his survivors please contact me immediately. I can be reached at 443-857-5560 or [e-mail me](mailto:). Your voices are needed!

You can learn more about the case of Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel at: http://www.theawarenesscenter.org/Sobel_BenZion.html

According to a rabbi who wish to remain anonymous:

Rabbi Grossman believes that Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel has done teshuva and makes sure that he is far away from any contact with children. He is NOT involved in the camp. He sits in an office hundreds of miles away from any child

Sincerely,

Vicki Polin,

Executive Director - The Awareness Center

www.theawarenesscenter.org

Kids in North getting recreation centers

ERIKA SNYDER

THE JERUSALEM POST Aug. 16, 2006

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525887303&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>

Although the rockets have stopped, the effects of the violence will continue to plague the children of the North. Israel Prize laureate Rabbi David Grossman of Beit Ha'emek, known by some as the "Disco Rabbi," has pledged to create recreation centers for thousands of these youngsters.

Grossman's Migdal Ohr foundation, which will run the initiative, was founded in 1972 to "provide education and guidance to children from underprivileged families from the North" according to the organization's Web site.

During the war, Migdal Ohr and Grossman provided 7,000 people from northern Israel with a safe and fun place to escape the violence, in camps across the Central region.

"We have received calls from over 1,000 parents from cities across the North," said Rabbi Shuey Fogel, who has worked with Migdal Ohr for two years. "We are doing this because people need help. This project is a continuation of the camp project."

The recreation centers will target three age groups - kindergarteners, preteens and teenagers.

Children of kindergarten-age and younger will be provided with reading and writing lessons, as well as games. Older children will be taught "Jewish values and traditions."

Fun will be an important focus for all the kids. They will be able to participate in sports, arts and crafts and even pool and ping-pong.

Fogel said the centers would open "as soon as possible" to help children readjust to normal life. He said he hoped they would be running when schools opened in the beginning of September.

"We will incorporate physiologists and social workers," said Fogel.

I helped take Sobel down

By Anonymous

June 15, 2008

<http://jewishsurvivors.blogspot.com/2007/02/does-anyone-know-whats-happening-with.html>

First, a little background. i too was a student at neveh for 2 years prior to the Telz stone move there were many things related to Sobel's behavior that at the time, to 17 and 18 year olds seemed a little odd, but in hindsight fit the profile of a well thought out megalomaniac, sexual predator. to list a few, the decision to locate Neveh on Moshav Beit Yehoshua, a truly isolated moshav, miles from Netanya, while nearly all other yeshivas catering to Americans were in Yershalayim (Jerusalem), only makes sense if your goal is to geographically, and psychologically isolate the boys (your prey) and yourself from civilization and the authorities. To the talmidim, neveh was our whole world, and Sobel our leader. We were only allowed to leave on Thursday nights after maariv, Friday mornings, and every third shabbos. these restrictions , violation of which would lead to an i.e. (instant expulsion) added to our isolation.the pious rabbi never seemed to be able to make it to minyan Fri. nights until well into kabbalat shabbat. guess he had more important places to be every Friday night. on his frequent fundraising trips to states, there was almost always a boy traveling with him, ostensibly to help him get from place to place. i suppose our esteemed genius rabbi couldn't read a map. upon his return, we were frequently told to line up in a row, to thank him and kiss him to show our appreciation. makes a lot more sense now. prior to one of those trips, the yeshiva was so low on money that for about a week our lunch was potatoes and jello.at the same time,the "rav" was having a new buzzer release locking door put in his office. this use of scarce funds caused a murmur amongst many of us, including many of those closest to him. when the rav got word of this, he announced an emergency sicha in which he, of course, cried and explained how much it hurt him not to be able to

buy us real food instead, but he was unable to as the "donor" of these funds.who was never revealed,had placed a specific restriction on said funds that they be used only to beautify the rav's office, lechavod hatorah that he was imparting. seems to me that only one who is so planned in his predatory tactics would see a pressing need for a locking door .all the better to molest you with. and I'd love to know how the extra lock served to beautify his office. I hope the "donor" wasn't upset. The sicha ended with vicious attack on all who had dared to question his integrity, as well as a threat to leave the yeshiva were it ever to happen again. I remember his exact words, don't ask questions on the rav! "how fortunate to his victims that he didn't carry it out. studies have shown, and interrogators know that as you tire, you become more open to many influences as your defenses weaken. with that knowledge, the sicha reserved for only certain bochrin started at 11 p.m. and frequently ran past 1 a.m. many sichot referred to us as an army of hashem, with guess who as our general. the more he was feared and revered and respected, and the less he was to be questioned, the more likely he would be to succeed in molesting boys, and the less likely to be questioned or caught. sounds like a pretty good plan. lets remember, he didn't just have a sudden urge he couldn't control and run up to random boys on the street for quick gratification. that might be the action of someone who is trying to control his urges but at certain moments loses control. on the contrary, the actions we know of involve meticulous planning, including his personal selection of boys that were accepted into yeshiva, isolating the yeshiva, instilling fear and reverence in him, with a healthy dose of how important it was to please the rav. oh, i forgot to mention that the highest honor at neveh was if you were selected to get "close" to the rav, spiritually, of course. if one were so selected, you would be encouraged to speak privately to him upon completion of the Thursday night sicha, at 1 in the morning. i was lucky enough to have that honor, and numerous times, upon entering his office would find him lying on his couch covered in a blanket, too tired to raise his head, after a grueling day of doing what, i don't know as he was never in the bais medrash.i was told on 2 occasions that in order to speak to him i had to move very close, since he was so hoarse he had to whisper. while he never tried to molest me, i think he was working towards it, unless i was just too unattractive to him.but i had been warned cryptically by a bochur who was very close to him, NOT TO GET CLOSE, with no reason offered. hindsight being so 20/20, the reason is clear now.the other bochurs strange behavior and complete disregard for all neveh rules makes sense now. the victims i know of all shared certain attributes, vulnerability and naivete.it might have stemmed from problems at home to having alienated their parents by either coming to yeshiva or staying past agreed upon return date, or to having had problems in America which made returning difficult. but all were vulnerable to a brilliant, charismatic predator. jumping ahead, years after i had finished neveh, a person close to me had returned to neveh and stayed on as a driver/secretary to the rav (please do not read ant respect or reverence into my use of the term "rav" as i am dripping with sarcasm when i write it and only do so because of its historical accuracy. i believe he is an animal who escaped justice and should have faced criminal charge.) back to the story, this person returned unexpectedly to our neighborhood and when i asked what he was doing home in the middle of the year, his only response was to curse Sobel he was afraid to tell me what happened, only that he saw something accidentally.due to his access to all the inner offices. apparently there was a miscommunication with the rav and my friend thought he was gone the whole day, when in fact he was in his office. my friend had used his keys to go in office, which he could only do when he knew rav was away. oops.anyway,he said that if he went public with what he knew he'd bring down the whole yeshiva which he was reluctant to do because it actually did a lot of good for a lot of guys. i told him that if what he knew could bring neveh down, then neveh should be downed. the ends cannot justify all means. he finally relented and told me that he had seen with his own eyes the rav in, shall we say, a compromising position with a bochur. i and another friend convinced him to tell his story to a rabbi we trusted, at which point my direct knowledge ended. through various sources, i believe this rabbi contacted many others, had a bais din convened and many other victims were found. as far as Adam Harishon's comments, i think its obvious who that is, and let me take issue with some of his "teshuva defense". first of all, he did not go out without a fight. he was negotiating the whole time as to what he could get. he ended up with some expensive computer and electronic equipment which had been donated by my friends father to neveh, not him. i was told there was also an emptying of the bank accounts, which, to my knowledge only he had access to, without even a board of directors to answer to, as there was none.how convenient.hardly the actions of a remorseful, penitent tsaddik who had a brief lapse in judgment these facts are bolstered by the emergency fundraising campaign undertaken by the hanhala to save neveh from immediate collapse. i believe that Adam Harishon's posts are quite self serving.due to his closeness to situation, many might have wondered why he was so unaware of all the strange behavior.why didn't he recognize all of the signs which were clearly present, perhaps his desire to believe that the rav did teshuva assuages some of his guilt feelings, and allows for a small modicum of rationalization, that not having brought the matter to the police, even after the fact, was a good decision, since the pious rav is clean as a whistle.and has not reoffended, as far as we know.i , however, having

read the recidivism rate for sex offenders, do not believe it is OK to take a chance of one more boy being a victim, even at the expense of a chillul Hashem the Catholics used that policy and it hasn't turned out that well. to me. peoples lives are more important. he destroyed many. and the lives affected were not limited to his victims. there was a core group of guys who had delayed or dropped their college goals, engagements, and alienated family , because they believed he was their just, brilliant leader, who would march them straight to olam haba. when the story broke, their worlds came crumbling down, some never to recover. i wont be more specific to protect them. if he wants to make it right with god, though i suspect he doesn't believe a word what he says, then let him do tshuva for god. but on this earth potential future victims rights to a life free from molestation exceeds a molesters right to be treated with respect or forgiven. would Adam Harishon bet his life that there has never been another victim since? i don't think so. and despite that he works in an office, is he being watched 24/7 dark people with these problems and his mind would have no trouble convincing gadol after gadol of his "cure" while carefully planning his next assault. don't believe it Adam Harishon he manipulated you quite easily for many years, and could easily do it again. you have a good heart, and to him that is your weakness. he laughs at people like you because you are so ready to believe in good. as far as the Baltimore angle, i never heard it. my sources are that he had been a dorm mashgiach, or something similar at a Chofetz Chaim branch in Monsey, had been caught with a boy, but because there was only one witness, he was permitted to stay in chinuch , and encouraged to go to Israel and start fresh, by a very esteemed gadol, who i wont mention as I'm not 100% sure, though the fact that this rabbi was a guest speaker at neveh while I was there supports the notion. This rabbi, like you, Adam, wanted to believe good and risked many, many future talmidims well being on it. oops. Sobel fooled them. oh well. so he ruined a few lives, at least there was no chillul Hashem, chas v'sholem. just some collateral damage. What's the big deal if lives of some teenagers were destroyed beyond repair? The LA, story was certainly not how the story broke, as Adam correctly points out, but I think there was some testimony at beis din regarding a prior fundraising trip there and an incident with the rav and a boy in a pool. If anyone has anything to add, please post. Thanks for reading.

Chabad promoting a sexual predator? - The Case of rabbi Ben Zion Sobel

May 27, 2011

It saddens me a great deal that The Awareness Center does not have the funds to operate as a non-profit organization. While we were functioning our sex offender registry would have warned everyone of the dangers of promoting this alleged sexual predator. The word alleged is used since this man was able to slip through the cracks and leave the US for Israel many years ago. I've been told by many extremely reliable individuals of the dangers this man. My sources include many rabbonium.

I am asking everyone to contact those in power at Chabad and warn them that by promoting Ben Zion Sobel, they are putting themselves at risk of a civil suit, if anyone else is "allegedly" harmed by this man by their promotion. This is especially true since they were already aware of the dangers he posses to Jewish children, teens and anyone else this man comes in contact with.

The Awareness Center needs to raise \$100,000 to be able to be able to function for one year. The funds would go to pay staff, secure office space, purchase office supplies, etc. Unfortunately, the organization can not function without PAID staff and other necessities.

If you would like this to happen, send your financial support to:

The Awareness Center, Inc.
P.O. Box 4824
Skokie, IL 60076



Chulent More Dear Than Moshiach

Having been acquainted with Lubavitch and the Rebbe since he was 18, Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel has many fascinating recollection from those years. Why does Chulent supersede Moshiach? What did the Rebbe respond to a Litvak who asked to be blessed for good grades on his secular studies?

Beis Moshiach Magazine

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http://chabad.info/index.php?url=article_en&id=23336

By Menachem Ziegelboim

Preparing Chulent Supersedes the Coming of Moshiach

One cannot help but be impressed by Rabbi **Ben Zion Sobel**, an outstanding talmid chacham whose daily schedule in his Ramot home revolves around Gemara and commentaries. He made aliya decades ago but one can easily detect his American accent.

R' Sobel was born in 1948 on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and he attended Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yosef on the East Side, a Litvishe yeshiva for Orthodox American boys.

One day, in the 60's, a friend told him that he had heard about Chabad and he suggested that they go together to attend a farbrengen of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Crown Heights. R' Sobel did not know what a farbrengen is but he was curious to find out and so he went.

"I walked into the big beis midrash and saw the Rebbe sitting at his place in the middle of the farbrengen, speaking as thousands sat and listened closely. I thought that I had missed his drasha, as it seemed he would be finishing soon. I didn't know that a farbrengen isn't a single speech and that it lasts for several hours. Generally, the farbrengens I attended ended at two in the morning."

Although decades have passed since then, R' Sobel remembers that first farbrengen he attended including what was said.

"That first farbrengen took place on a Thursday night. I realized afterward that it was in honor of Yud-Tes Kislev. It was late at night; I think 1:00 or 1:30. Suddenly, the Rebbe said, 'It is Thursday night and there are women here who need to prepare for Shabbos.' And the Rebbe began speaking about the importance of preparing food for Shabbos so much so that Chazal say that Moshiach will not come on Friday so as not to interfere with the Shabbos preparations. As important as the Geula is to the Jewish people, we see that preparing the chulent is even more important. The Rebbe said he would end the farbrengen early so that the women could go home and cook.

"After the sicha they sang a niggun and then the Rebbe said, 'I was thinking during the niggun that Thursday night is called 'leil mishmar' in all the yeshivos and they stay up all night and learn, and here I am, shortening a farbrengen!' And on second thought, the Rebbe decided to continue farbrenging, 'as long as it goes.' The farbrengen ended at dawn."

My List of Questions

Ben Zion found the farbrengens quite captivating and he felt he wanted to maintain a connection, albeit without becoming a Chassid.

Over the years, R' Sobel made the acquaintance of many roshei yeshiva and rabbanim in America. He became close enough to them to be able to observe their conduct and their way of paskening. "I did not belong to any group but I got something from everyone."

Although during the course of this interview, he made it clear several times that he is a Litvak, it seems that his soul is drawn to Chassidus on some level.

R' Sobel continued visiting 770 and when he heard about the possibility of having a private meeting with the Rebbe he made an appointment. He was only 18 years old at the time. He wrote a kvittel at the end of which he attached a list of people who needed a bracha for a refua. "Among the names, I included the late Satmar Rebbe, Yoel ben Chana and the late Boyaner Rebbe. Neither one was in the best of health."

I handed the pidyon nefesh to the Rebbe and he read it quickly. When he reached the names of the two Admorim, he commented that these were the Satmar Rebbe and the Boyaner Rebbe. 'What connection do you have with them?' he asked me in surprise.

"I said that I was a Chassid of all talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov. The Rebbe asked, 'The Admor of Ozarov is sick – why didn't you write down his name?' I said I hadn't known. The Rebbe asked, 'And if you had known, would you have written it?' I said yes, and the Rebbe smiled."

Before his birthday he heard that those with an upcoming birthday could have yechidus without having to wait on the usual line and he took this opportunity.

"They warned me that in the birthday yechidus you cannot ask questions; you just submit your pidyon nefesh, write the date, and the Rebbe gives you a bracha and sometimes mentions to give extra tz'daka on the birthday, add to the usual learning one does, and get an aliya beforehand.

"I went as a Litvak, not as a Chassid, and I didn't listen to instructions too closely," said R' Sobel with a smile. "I prepared a long list of questions to ask the Rebbe and took it in with me to the Rebbe's room. After the Rebbe

blessed me, I said I had some questions to ask him. 'Ask,' said the Rebbe. Our conversations were conducted in Yiddish.

"I took out the paper from my pocket and asked the first question. When I finished, I waited for the Rebbe to respond, but the Rebbe remained silent. I thought the Rebbe would answer each question separately but from his silence I understood that I should continue. I read all my questions, and there were many. I asked about fifteen questions. When I finished reading them, the Rebbe said, 'Now I will answer everything you asked,' and he proceeded to provide answers according to the order in which I asked the questions. He remembered every single one in order, which impressed me tremendously.

"A year later I had another birthday yechidus. This was at the end of the 60's and this time too, I told the Rebbe that I had questions to ask. The same story repeated itself as the year before.

"Among the questions that I asked, I included a question that I had asked the year before. I hadn't fully understood the answer. When the Rebbe got up to that question in his responses, he said, 'If you remember, you asked that question last year and I answered such-and such.' And he repeated what he told me the previous year."

R' Sobel was excited as he related this story. Not only the Rebbe's memory impressed him but the way the Rebbe answered him. The Rebbe didn't state that he had already answered the question; he mentioned it in a gentle way.

R' Sobel also has an interesting story about the date of his birthday:

"My birthday is on 20 Tammuz and when I went in for yechidus, and handed the Rebbe my pidyon nefesh, he asked me whether my birthday is on the 20th of the month or the 2nd. I said, the twentieth. The following year the Rebbe asked the same question and I gave the same answer. The third year, before going in for yechidus, I told one of the Chassidim who was there about this and he exclaimed, 'Don't you understand that the Rebbe is telling you something? Check your birth certificate again!' I wasn't such a Chassid to jump to conclusions because of the Rebbe's question.

"The third time the Rebbe asked me the same question and I, being a Litvak, dared to say, 'Why does the Rebbe ask me this every year? Are you trying to tell me something?' The Rebbe answered, 'No, it's just that the letter chaf is a half circle and you add something on the end and it looks like a beis.' I checked my birth certificate nonetheless but I found no mistake."

A Bracha for a Good Mark

"All the yeshiva high schools in the United States at that time had secular studies. Mine was no exception and the students had to pass their tests with a minimum of a 65. If you didn't pass, you had to repeat the entire course."

Ben Zion did not like secular studies and he avoided it as much as possible but he had no choice when it came to taking an important history test. "I did not know the material at all," he said. He began studying. "Failing was terrible. If you failed, you had to put in many hours into another course and I figured this would entail much more bittul Torah and I didn't want that. I went to the Rebbe and asked him for a bracha so I would do well on the test and he gave me a bracha.

I asked him if he passed. "Sure," he said with a chuckle, "even though I really didn't know the material."

When the Rebbe Interrupted Me

At the age of 21, before he married, R' Sobel began sharing the Torah he had learned. He had a group of young bachurim who desired to make strides in their avodas Hashem, in their learning, conduct and middos tovos. He learned musar with them and was their spiritual mentor.

In a yechidus, he told the Rebbe about this and presented some questions concerning the behavior of the bachurim.

“As in every yechidus, I sat facing the Rebbe and the conversation took a long time. It was two in the morning. Outside the room was a long line of waiting people. After a number of minutes, the bell rang to indicate my time was up. I ignored it.

“After three quarters of an hour, the secretary Rabbi **Binyamin Klein** opened the door, looked in, and waited for the Rebbe to finish talking and for me to speak. Then he came in and told me, ‘You are sitting here for three quarters of an hour already and there are many people waiting outside.’ I didn’t know what to say and I remained silent. The Rebbe waved his hand and said, ‘Soon, soon.’ R’ Klein left the room and the Rebbe continued speaking for another three quarters of an hour.”

R’ Sobel will never forget this z’chus, of sitting with the Rebbe in yechidus for an hour and a half. When I asked him what instructions the Rebbe gave him, he waved me off and continued to direct the conversation towards the topics he wished to discuss. However, he gave me a glimpse of one topic out of many that had been raised.

Generally, the Litvishe yeshiva bachurim at that time in America went to college to prepare them to make a living. Even “good” bachurim left yeshiva at some point and got a degree. The norm at the time was even for the sons and sons-in-law of American g’dolim to go to college.

“I was the talmid of Rabbi **Zeidel Epstein** who lived in Crown Heights (he was later the mashgiach ruchni in Yeshivas Torah Ohr). He was the only one who spoke against college when he addressed the talmidim in yeshiva but even he wasn’t completely against it and he maintained that someone who simply had to study a profession should go to college. The problem was that each bachur was sure he fit that category.

“When a group of bachurim formed around me, I knew I had to be a role model and I decided that I would not attend college. I consulted with R’ Epstein and he affirmed that I should continue learning in yeshiva. In order to appreciate the courage this took, I’ll tell you that out of the entire student body, there were only two bachurim who did not go to college, me and one other bachur.

“One of the topics I discussed with the bachurim was my not going to college. In nearly every conversation I brought this up. I spoke about it firmly and boruch Hashem, I was very successful and the number of boys who did not go to college grew.

“One day, one of the bachurim in this group said to me, ‘Rabbi Sobel, your talks are good and you are a good mashpia. We enjoy learning from you, but you are stuck on this topic of college and this is the reason you have only a small group of bachurim. If you didn’t talk about college so much, many more bachurim would join and your influence regarding other topics, no less important, would grow.’ He suggested that I speak about college once in a while but should otherwise talk about other subjects.

“I gave him my attention and responded honestly when I said I didn’t know what to tell him. I had to consult someone. In that long yechidus that I told you about, I brought this subject up. I told the Rebbe what the bachur had said and noted that until now I had always spoken against going to college.

“Out of character, the Rebbe stopped me in the middle of a sentence and declared, ‘And you should continue speaking this way and if possible, do so even more firmly.’ The Rebbe added, ‘Even if bachurim drop out of your group, they are leaving you and going to another rav and will get what they need from him. But there should be at least one person who speaks uncompromisingly against college. Continue doing what you’ve done until now.’”

The Power of Influence

As I said, R’ Sobel is a talmid chacham and he has a broad knowledge of Shas and commentaries. My conversation with him was spiced with verses and sayings of Chazal and it is impossible not to get into a Torah

discussion with him. When he quotes something, it's word for word, faithful to the source. He told me about a question in learning that he asked the Rebbe.

"In one of the yechiduyos I asked the Rebbe about a seeming contradiction between two Gemaras. In the tractate Beitza (16a) it says, 'All of a man's livelihood is designated for him between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur' (there are two versions of this), while in the tractate Nidda (69b and on) it says, 'The men of Alexandria asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya twelve things,' and one of the questions was, 'What should a person do to become rich? He said to them, he should do more business and deal honestly. They said, many have done so and it didn't help, but rather he should ask for mercy of the One who possesses the wealth as it says, 'The silver is Mine, the gold is Mine.'" So in one place it says that a person can take action to become wealthy and elsewhere it says that it is decreed what he will earn.

"The Rebbe listened and then gave a completely novel answer. Later on I saw Rabbi **Yitzchok Hutner z"l**, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, with whom I was also close, and I told him that I had been to the Lubavitcher Rebbe and he said such and such. I asked him whether the answer was correct and he said it was a famous question and there are many answers and what the Rebbe said was also a correct answer."

When I asked R' Sobel what the answer was, he said, "The Rebbe explained that on Rosh HaShana it is decreed how much a person will have in the upcoming year but the decree does not specify how much parnasa he will have, how much nachas he will have, how good his health will be, etc. Rather, a person receives a quota of pleasure in this world and it is man's choice, through his actions, to influence whether this pleasure will be from health, parnasa, or some other source. In the tractate Nidda it explains that a person can effect changes within his general circumstance and if he wants to be wealthy he should do more business.

"I remember that in one yechidus I brought up the topic of undesirable thoughts and I asked the Rebbe's advice. The Rebbe explained that a person cannot control his mind so as not to think, since every moment a person lives and is alert, he is thinking, but a person can control what he thinks about. If an undesirable thought comes, he has the ability to replace it with a different thought of Torah or a holy thought."

The Rebbe Poured Four L'chaims

At that time, a weekly paper was published with a thought on the parsha in English. Every week, they would mail the paper to hundreds of people. At first, they put the paper into an envelope but later on they printed it in a way that it could be folded and mailed without an envelope. When it was mailed in an envelope, next to the address were the words in Hebrew, "When is he [Moshiach] coming – when your wellsprings spread outward." Of course people threw the envelope out right away.

"It bothered me that people threw out an envelope with these words on it. I felt it was problematic. One time, at the end of a yechidus, I took the envelope out of my pocket and showed it to the Rebbe and asked whether it was permissible to throw it out. The Rebbe said he had never seen it before.

"As an impudent Litvak I asked, 'Do Chassidim do things without asking the Rebbe?' The Rebbe didn't react; he just smiled.

"The Rebbe told me to go to the office and talk to them about it, 'And they will probably ask a rav mora horaa. The rav will probably tell them that since Hashem's name is not written on it, nor the name of a tzaddik, it is permitted. But you should go to them in any case and point it out, because anything that can be made a point of, should be pointed out.'

"I knew that the Rebbe was particular about not paskening shailos and would send people to rabbanim. I took the envelope, folded it and put it back in my pocket and went out. Amazingly, whom did I see as soon as I left? Rabbi Shemtov, the man responsible for this publication. I went over to him and told him that I had just had yechidus and had spoken to the Rebbe about this and I repeated what the Rebbe said.

“R’ Shemtov didn’t respond; he just nodded. I don’t know whether it was connected or not but a few weeks later the envelope no longer had those words on it.”

What was the atmosphere like in yechidus?‘‘

When I was in the Rebbe’s room I felt very comfortable speaking to the Rebbe. He imparted a warm and close feeling and smiled a lot.”

R’ Sobel, as a young man, attended many of the big farbrengens such as those on Yud-Tes Kislev and Yud-Beis Tammuz. A Chassid in Crown Heights would call him at his yeshiva and let him know about an upcoming farbrengen.

“I once attended a farbrengen on Acharon shel Pesach. In Lubavitch they call it ‘Moshiach’s Seuda.’ It was customary to say l’chaim to the Rebbe four times. I came from Queens to 770 and it was very late because I had left after Yom Tov was over. The farbrengen was almost over and I was unable to say l’chaim four times.

“After Havdala the Rebbe gave out ‘kos shel bracha,’ and I passed by with my cup. I told the Rebbe that I had not said l’chaim on four cups and the Rebbe asked me why. I don’t remember exactly what I said but I saw he was dissatisfied. The Rebbe poured wine for me and I said l’chaim and he poured again and again and I said l’chaim, four times.”

What did they think in yeshiva of your going to Lubavitch?

“The Menahel Ruchni of our yeshiva was a farbrente Misnaged (smiling) even if the Rebbe says that today there are no more Misnagdim. Someone once put a booklet of the Rebbe’s sichos in Yiddish of which a significant part was devoted to Rashi’s commentary, on his shtender. The menahel himself spent a lot of time on Chumash and Rashi and when he got this pamphlet he glanced at it and was immediately drawn in. Afterward, he came over to me and said, ‘I didn’t know that your Rebbe learns Chumash and Rashi so well...’”

A Response Within Half an Hour

When R’ Sobel speaks about those days he does so nostalgically even though he does not think of himself as a Chassid, certainly not a Lubavitcher Chassid.

“I really miss the farbrengens. The Rebbe sat there for so many hours with the Chassidim and spoke and spoke, they sang and he spoke again. In other places I visited, there were divrei Torah at tishim but they were said briefly.”

R’ Sobel married at age 22 and for fifteen years they lived in Monsey and for two years in Boro Park. During this time he guided bachurim as he did previously.

In 5737 he and his family moved to Eretz Yisroel where he continued working with American bachurim who were learning in Eretz Yisroel.

In 5741 there was fear of a war breaking out. R’ Sobel was in America fundraising for the yeshiva. Since there were no longer any private audiences with the Rebbe, he wrote eight questions on two pages. Among other things he asked whether, if war broke out, to send the bachurim back to America. He also asked about his wife who was expecting a baby at the time, whether to send her to America.

“I left the letter in the secretaries’ office before mincha and went to the East Side. Within half an hour they called me with an answer: **‘In my opinion your questions are not practical since there won’t be a war. I will mention this at the gravesite.’** Needless to say, the Rebbe was right.

“I remember that when the Rebbe spoke about the miracles Hashem did with Operation Entebbe, the Satmar camp was angry because they were unwilling to accept the fact that Hashem had helped the Israeli soldiers. I was

in Philadelphia at the time and was close with Rabbi **Elya Svei** and Rabbi **Yaakov Kamenetzky**. R' Svei who knew that I visited Lubavitch told me his idea, that he and Rabbi Ruderman and Rabbi Kamenetzky, all leading Litvishe g'dolim in America, would go talk to the Rebbe.

"I asked what they would discuss and he said they would ask him to stop talking about the miracles of Entebbe and that he had said enough already. He asked me to speak to Rabbi Kamenetzky to see whether he agreed to go with them to the Rebbe.

"Before doing this I spoke to my rebbi, Rabbi Epstein who exclaimed, 'Where did we ever hear that you tell a leader of a k'hilla what to tell his Chassidim and what not to say? If the Lubavitcher Rebbe thinks he should say this, who are we to tell him what to do?'"

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"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

--Margaret Mead