In honor of Rosh HaShanah, the season of change, beginnings, and growth, Mishpacha talks to three builders who shaped and nurtured the Jewish community, each in their own sphere of influence. Yisroel Besser describes their challenges, hears their stories, and brings us their memories.

by Yisroel Besser

ARCHITECTS OF TRANSFORMATION

Grand Rabbi Moshe Taub
Rabbi Benyamin Kupetsky
Rabbi Pinches Lipschutz
THE HANDSHAKE THAT MELTS HEARTS

The Kalover Rebbe, Rav Moshe Taub, breathes new life into forgotten souls, one handshake at a time.

It was another time, another world, a time when a lone man traveled the bleak Ukrainian landscape, infusing multitudes of simple, ehrliche Yidden, with hope and life. He taught them, he sang with them, he danced with them, but most of all, he uplifted them. He taught them that their lives were holy, meaningful, worth living to the fullest.

When the heilege Baal Shem Tov would leave a town, it was forever changed. He was planting the seeds of Chassidus.

Once, according to chassidic legend, the tzaddik ventured far into the Hungarian countryside, and came to a small village, Serentch. As in every town, the people lined up to receive his blessing, this one for parnasah, another for health, yet a third for children.

There was a childless couple there, a simple, devout pair, who received a blessing from the tzaddik. Filled with hope and confidence, they returned home. A year later, they had a son, Yitzchok Eizik, and their home was filled with light.

In time, the child grew to be Rebbe, one who eventually brought Chassidus to Hungary.

Much like the Baal Shem Tov himself, he was perpetually in motion, traveling through the villages where Yidden lived, inspiring, teaching, igniting them. His songs became the precious legacy that generations of Hungarian Yidden passed on to their children, and even today, his famous "Solo Kokosh Mar," a song of yearning and hope, is sung on leil Shabbos in many homes.

Thus was the great dynasty of Kalov founded.

Today, the era of Rebbes that travel through villages, accompanied only by a few chassidim has ended. There are large, ornate buildings and institutions, and Rebbes have a whole cadre of attendants in charge of scheduling appointments.

Yet, in the middle of the bustling activity of today's Williamsburg is the court of a Rebbe, the present Kalover Rebbe of America, where little has changed.

The Rebbe is rarely at home, for like his holy ancestor, he is rushing through souls, and breathing new life into them. He has visited over thirty countries in search of Yidden, places where it was inconvenient to find food and lodging, places where they have never heard of Rebbes or Chassidus.

He has visited Brazil and Bolivia. He has traveled to Gibraltar and Johannesburg. He has spent time in Marseilles and Malaga. He has been to Deal and to Dallas and many places in between. Everywhere, he sees Yidden; everywhere he injects them with hope, with new life.

He asks for nothing. The signs that go up prior to his arrival promise that there will be no solicitation and the Rebbe refuses money from the people. He asks for something bigger; Shabbos, tefillin, family purity ...

He believes that the important thing is just to get a commitment, however small or insignificant it may seem. He seeks only to open the heart, to touch the core, to arouse the pintele Yid.

He has found a common language with the most diverse Yidden. He has visited Columbia University, where he received long lines of students. He has a unique connection with the students of the Israeli high schools, and on his frequent visits to Eretz Yisrael, he spends days, from noon until after midnight, in conversation with secular Israeli students.

He can talk to doctors and lawyers, displaying an incredible depth of knowledge. Yet he has a special rapport with teenagers, and in each city he visits, he inevitably spends many hours at the non-religious high schools. He has successfully counseled many of today's teens through difficult times. It is astounding that this older man, born in Romania, is so "in touch" with the issues facing America's youth.

Truly a unique person, the Kalover Rebbe.

I visited the Rebbe, looking to give our readers the opportunity to encounter inspiration. I entered the Rebbe's room with reverence, and was immediately struck by his youthful appearance. He is over seventy years old, but with his laughing eyes and shining countenance, he seems much younger.

I had been told about the Rebbe's famous handshake, but nothing could have
THE AMERICAN TORAH COMMUNITY
FINDS ITS VOICE

Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz and the Yated Ne’eman gave new meaning to the concept of the community newspaper.

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omeone once commented that if you want to have your finger on the pulse of a nation, the surest way is to read its newspapers. The press has been the battleground of many a major conflict, and the mandate of putting quill to ink is no less dangerous than aiming a cannon.

This has been true in our history as well. Over a hundred years ago, when the maskilim sought to undermine the foundations of our faith, they used the vehicle of enlightened people: the press. In between the stories of Jews around the world and general news, they pushed their vitriolic message, their poisonous views. Yidden, always eager for news of their brethren, purchased these papers, allowing this venom into their homes.

Great Torah leaders, including Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Specter, the legendary Kovno Rav; and Rabbi Alexander Moshe Lapides, the rav of Rasain, joined with a man of the spirit, someone gifted enough to fight back. The newspaper HaLevanon was founded, and quickly became the vehicle for the opinions and views of traditional Torah Judaism. In its pages, there was news, but also pure, undiluted hashkafah. HaLevanon became the unifying factor in the lives of Yidden separated by the frozen rivers and treacherous roads of Russia, the source for the views of our leaders.

The one who put this endeavor together and kept it going was Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan’s confidante, Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Lipschutz.

Generations later, the spiritual heir of Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan, the father of the yeshivah world, sat in his room in Bnei Brak. There was no satellite technology; no computer screens printing out the latest information, but Rav Elazar Menachem continues on page 84