

Autobiographical Sketch of Chaim Bischitz

Chaim ב"ר wrote this "autobiographical sketch" at the age of 18, as part of his application to 'Machon L'Madrachei Chutz L'Aretz.' Here he outlines his childhood, and the increasing importance of Bnei Akiava in his life.

On May 5, 1945, I was born in The Bronx, N.Y.C. I lived, until the age of 12, in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn.

At home I was taught to follow the traditional precepts of Judaism, and at the age of three I was fluent in the Brachot on all foods, and in the prayer of "Shma." The atmosphere at home was always very orthodox, and instilled within me a feeling for Yahadut.

My father, however, was not a very religious man, and this factor was the cause of my parents being separated when I was about four (4) years old. I remained with my mother, and the two of us went to Miami Beach for an extended vacation. At the end of a duration of five months, we returned to N.Y. and my parents were divorced.

In the following September, I was enrolled in kindergarten at the Yeshivah Rabbi David Leibowitz in East Flatbush, Brooklyn. I continued at Y.R.D.L. through elementary school, and received a very basic Jewish and Religious, as well as secular education.

My mother, in order to support the two of us, returned to her pre-marital occupation, that of a bookkeeper, but always managed to be home by the time the school bus rolled up in front of our house.

My mother tried very hard to be a good mother, and at the same time take the place of a father, but as time went on the absence of a father was noticed more and more. I can now recall having asked my mother such questions "When will I get a new daddy?" or "Where is daddy now?"

It wasn't too long afterwards, that a man, most affectionately called "Uncle Dov", became a very frequent visitor at our apartment. When I

was about ten years old, after more than five fatherless years, my mother remarried.

I loved my newly acquired daddy very much, and he loved me even more.

My “parents” then opened a Laundromat (a place to which people bring their soiled clothes for cleaning) not too far from our apartment. At first business was very slow but in time things began to perk up and the little store grew into a full-scale cleaning establishment, with all the modern machinery.

Quite habitually, I began coming to the store, whenever possible, usually on Sundays, to do whatever I could to help out.

On one Sunday, an accident occurred which affected my walking for the next two years. One of the machines fell on my left leg resulting in the compounded fracture of the whole leg. This, B’ezrat Hashem, has healed completely though and I am now able to walk, run and jump as if nothing ever happened. I was, however, laid up in the hospital for eight (8) weeks, and then confined to a wheel chair at home for another seven months. My teacher was a close friend of my mother, and she came to my home very frequently for private tutoring. I studied very intensely, and with my mother’s and teacher’s help, I managed not to fall behind in my school work. Oddly enough, when I did return to school my leg was so completely healed, that I became the track champion of the seventh grade. As I already mentioned, I have had no repercussions, and ב”ה have full utility of both my legs.

Though it was impossible that summer, because I was still unable to walk, it had always been customary for me to go to camp every summer. It was at summer camp that I was first introduced to Israeli culture since the program of the camp included much stress on Hebrew and Israel. There was Israeli song and dance, and much emphasis on the conversational use of Hebrew. This exposure to a completely Jewish cultural atmosphere prompted me to join Bnei Akiva when I returned to the city in September.

Having just graduated elementary school, and having moved to a new neighborhood, I feel very quaint, but I was made to feel right at home amongst the “chevra” at the “ken”.

Within a few weeks I felt very much a part of the Ken. I had found a place where I actually felt I belonged. The “Ruach” and general atmosphere produced by the “chaverim” completely entranced me and shall stay with me for many years.

At the same time I began attending high school at Mesivta Torah Vodaath in Williamsburgh, where I had just moved a few weeks before. The studies at the Mesivta were quite different from what I had been used to before, and the change was a bit hard. My “madrich” at the ken helped me a lot in this vein, and this added to my “kesher” to the ken. However it was not until תש”ך that I became associated with the tnua at large. One of the chaverim at the ken brought me to a weekend of the shevet, which is the system used by Bnei Akiva to form a socio-cultural association between chaverim of the same age throughout the city. That was all I needed. It was then that I became a real Bnei Akivanick. From then on my whole life revolved around Bnei Akiva and its “tochniot”.

In Kislev 5721, my father decided that it would be enlightening for me to spend some time in an out-of-town yeshivah, and soon afterwards I left for Baltimore, Md. To study at Yeshivat Ner Yisrael. Whilst in Baltimore I continued my kesher with B.A., and quite frequently went to the sniff (as the ken was now called) in Baltimore. In that summer, however, my mother become very sick and I was forced to remain in N.Y.C. the following semester.

It was about this time that I began thinking in terms of going to Israel in the near future. However, my mother was still quite sick at the time of my graduation from high school and to leave her then was quite impossible. I then began my college education at C.C.N.Y. without choosing any particular field of study, in the hope of going to Israel very shortly. I had hoped that such an experience would make a profound impression on me, thereby affecting my choice of major in college.

At about this time I began noticing, the slackening of the Ruach at Hanatziv (the ken in Williamsburgh) due to the fact that the Jewish people had moved en mass and I hoped that by attending Machon L'Madrichim Chutz L'Aretz, I would be able to return to Williamsburgh and be able to reorganize and revitalize the Snif.

In January 1963, I was appointed Mirakez Snif and I became very closely associated with the problem of hadracha and chinuch, involved in the organization of a snif.

It is my hope that by attending the Machon, I will be able to prepare myself for this task, as well as be able to see first hand the life, the ideals, the goals, which I hold so dear and towards which I am educating the chanichim at the sniff. I hope that בע”ה I will be able to eventually return to Eretz Yisroel as a “Toshav” rather than a “Ger”.

נוכה לביאת גואל צדק במהרה בימינו. אמן.