

Treasured Few



The following is a letter by the Rebbe's "Choizer", Reb Yoel Kahan, addressed to his family in Eretz Yisrael while he was a Bochur studying in 770.

Its lines vividly recount the fatherly attention he and his peers in Yeshivah merited receiving from the Rebbe on Erev Yom Kippur, 5712. It was to be the first of what would become a longstanding custom throughout the years; the Rebbe would deliver the "Birkas Habonim" – exclusively to the Yeshivah Bochurim – just before entering the Shul for Kol Nidrei on Yom Kippur eve.

13 TISHREI, 5712

On Erev Yom Kippur, after davening, Anash entered the Rebbe's room to request "*Lekach*" and he gave each of them a piece, blessing them for the coming year.

When I came in to receive "*Lekach*", the Rebbe said, "Have a *Shona Tova Umisuka*." He then gave me an additional piece and said, "This is for your mother and father; write to them and wish them a *Shona Tova Umisuka* and good health."

After midday, a group of Anash entered the Rebbe's room to request his Brocha, and he blessed them. An additional group arrived after mincha, and then, as evening approached, a third group too.

I was part of the third group. When all the rest of the group had already left, the Rebbe summoned me and said, "Tell the Bochurim that they can come in later."

I did not fully understand what he meant – I thought he was referring only to

those that had not yet had a chance to come in, so I was wondering why he would single out the Bochurim as a group. But before I had a chance to ask anything, he clarified: "I mean even those who were inside already – but only the Bochurim." [Many of those in the three groups that had already come in to receive the Rebbe's Brocha were in fact Bochurim].

When we came in, the Rebbe was already wearing his *Kittel* and wrapped in his *Tallis*, and his face wore a look of awe.

The Rebbe looked at each of us in a frightening gaze. It was a look that I had never seen on his holy face in the past. [I spoke to some of the other Bochurim afterwards and they confirmed that they too had never seen the Rebbe in this manner before].

Before beginning to speak, he lowered his *Tallis* over his face and his body trembled. It was a frightening scene indeed.

"Being that you learn in the Rebbe's Yeshivah, you are the Rebbe's children; we will therefore bless you with *Birkas Habonim!*"

While saying the words "you are the Rebbe's children," the Rebbe's voice choked up while tears streamed down his face.

He then began reading the *Pessukim* from the open *Siddur* on his table, and when beginning the Brocha ("*Yevorechicha*"), he lifted his hands.

The Rebbe *Shlita*, for his part, is like a real father ("Av Mammosh"); blessing us with *Birkas Habonim* on Erev Yom Kippur. [You should have seen how he was trembling at the time].

If only we can be true children as well...