

CHOF BEIS SHEVAT: A CHOSSID'S APPROACH

Chof Beis Shevat this year will mark the twenty-fifth *Yohrtzeit* of the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka ע"ת

When approaching a day like Chof Beis Shevat, there are several points that we, as Chassidim, draw upon when relating to a day of such significance.

WHAT IT MEANS TO THE REBBE

Firstly, it is a day that meant so much to the Rebbe in its deepest sense. Anyone present during that period can relate how shocking it was to see the extent that the *Histalkus* had on the Rebbe.

We need not elaborate upon this point. It's clear for all to see on the videos that are available from after *Shiva* (as well as the audio recordings of the *Shiva* itself: the Rebbe's *davening* at the *Amud* and especially during the *Nichum Aveilim*).

One of the earlier Rebbeim whose Rebbetzin's *Histalkus* was during his lifetime, was the Tzemach Tzedek. The story is told¹ that after she passed away, the Tzemach Tzedek refused to be comforted. Hearing the news of her *Histalkus*, he said "עולמי חשך בעדי" – "My world has been darkened..."²

1) See Igros Kodesh from the Rebbe, Vol. 5 p. 266; Vol. 7 p. 355; Vol. 22 p. 279.

2) Sefer Hasichos of the Frierdiker Rebbe, Summer 5700 p. 95.

It was quite apparent that the Rebbe was pained greatly by the *Histalkus* of the Rebbetzin. Immediately upon the conclusion of *Shiva*, the Rebbe said a *Sicha* in his house before *davening Maariv*. One need only watch a glimpse of the video of this *Sicha* to observe the Rebbe's regard towards Chof Beis Shevat.

Another point that displays how much the *Histalkus* meant to the Rebbe is the extent of how far the Rebbe changed conduct after *Chof Beis Shevat*.

For the entire year of *Aveilus*, the Rebbe remained at home. All the *Tefillos*, *dollars*, and *Sichos* (during the week) were all held at home.

The Rebbe also no longer held any weekday *Farbrengens*.

Additionally, there were many other changes in conduct in general.

THE REBBE'S PRIVATE AFFAIR?

One might ask: But isn't this the Rebbe's own private affair? Why should Chassidim get involved in such an ordeal at all?



There is a two-fold answer to this question:

A) Even were it to be merely a private affair – nevertheless, as Chassidim, we understand and feel that an issue which means so much to the Rebbe is automatically of importance and significance to a Chossid.

There is an interesting *Sicha* said by the Rebbe on Shabbos Gimmel Tammuz, 5718³, wherein the Rebbe explains why is it that the Frierdiker Rebbe didn't establish Gimmel Tammuz as a Yom Tov, although, in a sense, it is a day that calls for even greater celebration than the actual *Chag Hageulah* of Yud Beis Tammuz (after all, on Gimmel Tammuz the

3) Toras Menachem Vol. 23 p. 105 and further.



THE REBBE PERSONALLY HANDS OUT KOVETZ CHOF BEIS SHEVAT TO THOUSANDS ON THE REBBETZIN'S FOURTH YOHRZEIT, CHOF BEIS SHEVAT, 5752

פעולתם של נשיאי חב"ד קשורה עם, ונפעלת ע"י הרבניות הצדקניות

מהחילוקים שבין האבות לאמהות – שאצל האמהות מודגשת יותר הירידה לברר עניני העולם, משא"כ האבות שמצד עצמם הם למעלה מהעולם, ופעולתם בעולם באופן המתאים נעשית ע"י האמהות דוקא...

...ומזה מובן גם בנוגע לגילוי תורת החסידות (בחודש כסלו) – שבזה מודגשת ביותר הירידה לברר העולם, כי מצד התגברות החושך בעולם הוצרך להיות הגילוי דפנימיות התורה, עד לגילוי באופן של הבנה והשגה ("תפרנסון") בתורת חסידות חב"ד, ובאופן ד"פוצו מעינותיך חוצה" דוקא – שפעולתם של נשיאי החסידות קשורה עם (ונפעלת על ידי) הרבניות הצדקניות, ע"ד ודוגמת פעולת האבות ע"י האמהות.

וכאמור, ענין זה הוא בהדגשה יתירה בחודש כסלו ובפ' תולדות – שכל עניני האבות, אבות החסידות, וכן האמהות והרבניות הצדקניות, ישנם ככל התוקף והשלימות ("קדושה לא זזה ממקומה"), ופועלים פעולתם כו'.

(משיחת ר"ח כסלו ו"פ תולדות ה'תשמ"ט. מוגה)

Frierdiker Rebbe was spared from a much more harsh sentence).

The point explained in that *Sicha* is that a Rebbe, in his being a "*Neshoma Klolis*" and concerned only with the needs of his Chassidim, will not emphasize a date which involves only himself personally. Since it was on Yud Beis Tammuz when the [Frierdiker] Rebbe was able to leave prison and be with his Chassidim again, it was that day that he chose to establish as a Yom Tov.

But a Chossid with true *Hiskashrus* to the Rebbe also thinks about the Rebbe on a personal level. Realizing what the day of Gimmel Tammuz meant for the [Frierdiker] Rebbe himself – the day that his very life was saved – should bring about the greatest *Simcha* by a Chossid! Especially considering the fact that a Rebbe is a "*Neshoma Klolis*" and therefore everything in the life of a Rebbe, even so-called private affairs, is essentially a general matter which pertains to all of *Klal Yisroel*. (See full transcript of the *Sicha* for more details).

B) However, the truth is that the Rebbe made no indication of this *Yohrtzeit* being a private matter – and, to the contrary: the Rebbe shared this date with Chassidim in an unprecedented manner⁴.

4) In general, the Rebbe spoke certain expressions about this day – which we haven't found by the Hilulas of other Rebbeim!

As one example: In the Kuntres "*B'cha Yevarech Yisroel*" (compiled from a few *Sichos* the Rebbe dedicated to Chof Beis Shevat, 5752 – *Sefer Hasichos* 5752 Vol. 2 p. 344), the Rebbe notes that being she was the daughter of a Rebbe – her *Histalkus* accomplishes an elevation by all Yidden!

All throughout the entire year after the *Histalkus*, the Rebbe spoke non-stop about the Rebbetzin, as well as each year on the *Yohrtzeit*.

In 5752, the Rebbe stood for hours and personally handed out a unique *Kuntres* – “*Kovetz Chof Beis Shevat*” to all; men, women, and children. Everyone received a plastic sleeve containing the *Kuntres*, a five-dollar bill, and a piece of “*Lekach*”. These are facts which cannot be ignored. The Rebbe clearly invited all of the Chassidim to join in marking the day of Chof Beis Shevat.

THE ACTIVE ROLE OF OUR REBBETZINS

An additional point in our approach to *Chof Beis Shevat*:

In a fascinating *Sicha* said in Kislev, 5749⁵, the Rebbe explains that throughout the generations, our *Rebbeim's* work in transforming this world was partnered by the work of their Rebbetzins. In order to reach the lowest realms and affect them as well, the Rebbetzins in each generation played an active role.

Clearly then, in addition to all she sacrificed for Chassidim by giving the Rebbe over to the general public throughout all the years of his *Nesius*, the Rebbetzin also takes part in the Rebbe's *Nesius* on a spiritual level, and in his connection to us as Chassidim⁶.

5) Sefer Hasichos 5749 Vol. 1, p. 84 and further.

6) It's interesting to note: During the Rebbetzin's *Levaya*, there were many TV camera crews that had come to cover the event for news stations. One of the reporters is recorded as saying that as he went about the crowd and spoke to many people, he gathered from their words

In the abovementioned *Sicha* that the Rebbe said at the conclusion of the *Shiva*, there were unbelievable expressions the Rebbe used regarding the Rebbetzin; the special connection she has with her father, the Frieddiker Rebbe and the qualities (“*Zechuyos*”) she obtained in her own right, which serve as a source of blessing to all who offered comfort after her passing⁷.

THE REBBE'S CHILDREN

Another point to be taken into account with regards to *Chof Beis Shevat* is that we, as Chassidim are the Rebbe's children, and therefore it is only befitting that we should act on the *Yohrtzeit* of the Rebbetzin as we would for our own Mother.

It has been told many times that the Rebbetzin once responded to a child (one of Reb Zalman Jaffe's grandchildren) who asked her “Where are your children?” she said: “All of the Chassidim are our children!”

Additionally, reliable sources tell that right after the Rebbe was notified about the *Histalkus*, one of the first things he did was to give out an instruction “מ'דארף מודיע זיין די קינדער; די שלוחים” (“We must notify the children; the *Shluchim*”)⁸.

that there were basically two points in the feelings of the members of the crowd: Firstly, they look at the Rebbetzin as an illustrious mother and have enormous respect for her in her own right; and secondly, they have tremendous affection for her husband, and they therefore feel that “His sorrow is our sorrow”.

7) See full transcript – Sefer Hasichos 5748 Vol. 1 p. 271 and further.

8) As told by Rabbi Nachman Sudak, Shliach in London England, who heard it directly from, the Rebbe's *Mazkir*, Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, on Chof Beis Shevat, 5748.

THE YOHRTZEIT TO US

From all of the above we can discern that the day of Chof Beis Shevat is one that holds the greatest significance to us as Chassidim of the Rebbe, and it must be approached accordingly.

The day should be utilized with the appropriate conduct of a *Yohrtzeit*, reciting *Mishnayos*, learning extra Torah from the *Sichos* and *Ma'amorim* said and prepared by the Rebbe in connection with this day, increasing in *Tzedoka*⁹, and farbrenging with the intention of strengthening our *Hiskashrus* to the Rebbe.

There has also been a special video prepared by JEM this year in honor of the 25th *Yohrtzeit*, called *והחיי יתן אל לבו* – “Take to Heart”. It is advisable to watch the entire production which captures many of the *Sichos* and *Pe'ulos* that the Rebbe held on and around Chof Beis Shevat, and will assist the viewer in obtaining a proper feel for the day.

Let us hope that with all of our efforts, we will be *Zoche* to the coming of Moshiach, and in the Rebbe's words during the *Shiva*¹⁰:

“Her first name was ‘Chaya’, which means ‘life’. That is the name that will be inscribed on her *Matzeiva*; that means that it is perpetual even after the life of this person; until *Techiyas Hameisim*. I hope it will be very soon!”

May it be *מש ומיד ממש*! ■

9) See *Sichas Chof Beis Shevat*, 5750, where the Rebbe instructs to give *Tzedoka* in amounts of 470 (ע"ת), the *gematriya* of the Rebbetzin's name. (Sefer Hasichos 5750 Vol. 1 p. 298).

10) To Mr. Dov Hikind; 24 Shevat, 5748. See excerpt further in this publication.