

ואברכה מברכך

Brachos from Chassidim to the Rebbe and from the Rebbe to Chassidim

Every year, thousands of letters would be sent to the Rebbe from all sorts of people with *brachos*, well-wishes and the like, in connection with Yud-Aleph Nissan. In the Rebbe's letters during the month of Nissan, he would often acknowledge the well-wishes of the sender and thank them warmly. In many years, the Rebbe would also publicly thank the well-wishers at the Yud-Aleph Nissan farbrengen.

As the years went by, a *minhag* was established that aside from the personal *brachos* given, a public, communal *bracha* would be given to the Rebbe by a group of elder Chassidim representing Chassidim worldwide.

The first time known to us that this occurrence took place was on Yud-Aleph Nissan 5712*—the Rebbe's fiftieth birthday. After the Rebbe said a *maamar* in his room to a preselected group of Chassidim,⁶ Reb Shmuel Levitin approached the Rebbe's desk and *bentched* him. He concluded his *bracha* by saying: "As the *mizmor* says⁷: "Tashmi'eni sasson v'simcha, let me hear tidings of joy and gladness." The Rebbe responded with a smile: "The *mizmor* also continues 'Tageilna atzamos dikisa, let the bones You have crushed exult...'"

It is not clear if in the next few years this occurrence repeated itself, and until Yud-Aleph Nissan 5723* the only official *brachos* documented are 5715* and 5716*.

From 5723* and on, it seems that this became a yearly occurrence. The *bracha* usually took place either after Maariv on the night of Yud-Aleph Nissan, or after the Rebbe davened Mincha upon arriving back from the Ohel the following day. When the Rebbe would return from shul, the delegation of elder Chassidim would be waiting outside the Rebbe's room. As in the earlier years, Reb Shmuel

was usually the one to actually give the Rebbe the *bracha*, in the name of Chassidim worldwide. After Reb Shmuel finished, the Rebbe would usually thank the delegation and follow with a short *bracha* of his own. In an interesting twist, in 5723*, the words the Rebbe used were; "May Hashem help, that all the *brachos* you *bentched* me with, and the *brachos* I will *bentch* you with—should come to fruition."

In the later years, until Yud-Aleph Nissan 5746*, Reb Moshe Pinchas Katz, the venerated *gabbai* of 770 gave the *bracha*. Many times, in the

AT THE OHEL

Interestingly, it seems that on Yud-Aleph Nissan the Rebbe would make a point of being at the Ohel alone. Until the summer of 5717, whenever the Rebbe would go to the Ohel, Rabbis Hodakov, Kazarnovsky and Groner would come along with the Rebbe in the car. However, in an entry dated Yud-Aleph Nissan 5715, Rabbi Hodakov records in his diary how on that day he was planning on traveling to the Ohel with the Rebbe as always. However when he came to 770 in the morning, he found out that the Rebbe had already left for the Ohel, and said not to tell the others. He also writes how, unusually, the Rebbe left his house at 5:30 in the morning, had gone to the *mikveh* twice, and left to the Ohel at precisely nine in the morning.

In Rabbi Groner's diary he relates that one year, Rabbi Krinsky (who drove the Rebbe to the Ohel) had told him that on Yud-Aleph Nissan the Rebbe asked that he not enter the Ohel while was inside.

* 5712-1952, 5723-1963, 5715-1955, 5716-1956, 5746-1986, 5717-1957, 5715-1955



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Rebbe's response, the Rebbe would include references to timely events, such as "*veheishiv lev avos al—yedei—banim*, in 5740* (a campaign to intensify the activities with Jewish children, with the spirit that every child can make a tremendous impact), or printing *Tanyas*, in 5744*.

In later years the *bracha* turned to be a full-length *sicha*, and beginning

from 5736* the Rebbe would edit the *bracha* for publication.

On Yud-Aleph Nissan 5745*, the last year that Reb Moshe Pinchas Katz delivered the *bracha*, the Rebbe reacted in an unusual way. The Rebbe appeared to be looking at the ground as Reb Moshe Pinchas gave the *bracha*, and seemed to be trembling in an unusual way while answering

with a *bracha* of his own. Another unusual factor was that the Rebbe's response was relatively longer than in prior years. Reb Moshe Pinchas passed away the next year. Reb Zalman Gurary replaced Reb Moshe Pinchas and continued delivering the *bracha* from 5746* and on.