

לזכות
החיילת בצבאות ה'
רבקה תחי'
לרגל הולדתה
ביום י"ד סיון ה'תשע"ו – שנת הקהל
נדפס ע"י הור"י
הרה"ת ר' שלמה מנחם מענדל וזוגתו
מרת דבורה לאה שיחיו
מטלס



In the
Presence
of
Raya



LEVI FREIDIN via JEM, TISHREI 5736, 14045

Encounters with the Rebbetzin



The mailman was a common figure in 770; every day, he would lug in sacks of mail for the Rebbe. The office of the *mazkirus* was popular with the phone company as well; three regular lines rang off the hook, day in and day out. This was all in addition to the mill of thousands of people coming in and out of 770; be it a *yom tov*, *yoma d'pagra*, *yechidus* night or dollars morning, there was always a reason for another group of visitors to pile through 770's front door.

Life at 770 was based solely around the Rebbe. At farbrengens, davening, and even walking in and out of his room, the Rebbe was regularly followed by Chassidim eager to catch a glimpse and digest his every move.

However, as thousands of people encountered the Rebbe in so many different ways, almost no one was privy to the Rebbe's home and to the Rebbetzin. Consistently shying away from the public eye, there are only a handful of people who merited to bask in the presence of the person who carried the weight of the *nesius* together with the Rebbe for almost forty years.

“והחי יתן אל לבו”—The living shall take to heart.”

In the period following the Rebbetzin's *histalkus*, the Rebbe quoted this *possuk* numerous times, stating that we must all take a lesson in our *avodas Hashem* from the Rebbetzin, thereby improving our characteristics and becoming closer to Hashem.

With the upcoming *yom hilulah* of the Rebbetzin on Chof-Beis Shevat, the staff of A Chassidisher Derher sat down with three individuals who, each in their own way, merited to spend precious time in the presence of the Rebbetzin and glimpse at her holy persona.

In the following interviews, we will hear about some of their experiences and try give our readership the opportunity to learn from and about the Rebbetzin.



IN CONVERSATION *with* **RABBI YEHUDA KRINSKY**

A KINDNESS UNREPAYABLE

My first interaction with the Rebbetzin was early in the 5700s.

I came to New York in 5706 to learn in Tomchei Temimim, which was located on Bedford Avenue corner Dean Street, in Bedford Stuyvesant. When Chassidisher *yomim tovim* would come around, like Yud-Tes Kislev or Yud-Beis Tammuz, the Frieddiker Rebbe would hold a farbrengen in the dining room on the second floor of 770.

About an hour before the farbrengen, baalei battim and *bochurim* would line up by the two stairways to the second floor—we used to call them the “wooden stairs” and the “metal stairs”—to try getting into the room, or at the very least, to be able to have a quick look inside.

At a certain time, the door to the second floor apartment would be opened and the older Chassidim would be allowed inside. There would be about 20 seats around the table, and the rest of the crowd would stand around those sitting.

At some point, though, the door would close. There was a limited capacity to the dining room; this was before the days of proper air conditioning, and the room needed to be airy and not detrimental to the Frieddiker Rebbe’s health.

I didn’t have any reason to believe that I would get in, as I was just a young *bochur*, about 14 years old; but being an aspiring Chassidisher *bochur*, this is where I wanted to be. I stood by the door of the metal stairs and waited, hoping that maybe, *ulay yerachem*, I would be let inside.

Suddenly, the door opened. It was the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka who opened the door. She looked at me, and said: “*Gei arein* (go inside).”

I went inside.

The scene was indescribable. The Frieddiker Rebbe was seated in his chair at the head of the table, his *shtreimel* on his holy head. The Rebbe was sitting to his left, Rashag to his right. Seeing this

sight of the Frieddiker Rebbe, felt like being in Gan Eden; it was total spirituality.

I am eternally grateful to the Rebbetzin for granting me the gift of being at my first farbrengen with her father the Frieddiker Rebbe. This experience is forever engraved in my mind and heart.

A HOT TEA ON A HOT DAY

Yud-Beis Tammuz 5715 was a hot summer day. As usual, I drove the Rebbe to the Ohel. In the early years, the Rebbe would spend about an hour and a half at the Ohel, not much longer than that.

We arrived back in Crown Heights at about four o’clock in the afternoon. The Rebbe davened *mincha* in 770, and then I drove the Rebbe home



RABBI YEHUDA KRINSKY (R) AS A BOCHUR.

to his apartment at 346 New York Avenue corner President Street, where the Rebbe and Rebbetzin lived on the third floor. This was a short while before they moved to the house at 1304 President Street.

After the Rebbe entered the building, I realized that I didn't know how long the Rebbe would be staying at home before returning to 770 for the night's farbrengen. The Rebbe hadn't said how long he would be, and I hadn't asked if I was to wait, or come back later.

Going against my nature, I left the car and went up to the Rebbe's apartment to ask.

I knocked on the door, the Rebbetzin opened, and before I had a chance to say anything, she began to welcome me:

"Oh, Rabbi Krinsky, *kumt arein*, come inside, you are probably tired and have not eaten today, it's such a hot day... Let me pour you a cup of tea."

One could not decline this very gracious welcome from the Rebbetzin, and, having no choice, I entered the apartment. She asked me to sit at the table in the kitchen.

She served me a hot cup of tea. When I told the Rebbetzin why I came up, she said that she would ask the Rebbe when he was planning to return to 770.

She returned a moment later, and told me that the Rebbe would be returning to 770 in ten minutes.

Meanwhile, the tea is sitting in front of me, and here I am, a *bochur* in the Rebbe's home, contemplating how to drink this boiling hot tea. Nevertheless, I somehow managed to do it.

I was very uncomfortable sitting there, I felt like I was intruding, and I impatiently waited for the minutes to pass. Soon the Rebbe was ready and came into the kitchen. I followed the Rebbe into the elevator and we drove back to 770.

THAT NIGHT, IN ONE OF THE SICHOS AT THE FARBRENGEN, THE REBBE TOLD A STORY ABOUT THE FRIERDIKER REBBE... ASIDE FOR THE REBBE AND I, I DON'T THINK ANYONE FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE CONTEXT OF THE STORY...

That night, in one of the *sichos* at the farbrengen, the Rebbe told a seemingly unrelated story about the Frierdiker Rebbe, who once in his youth, came home on a hot summer day and wanted to drink something cool. But the Rebbe Rashab noticed, and told him to drink a hot cup of tea instead.¹

I wonder if anyone else at the farbrengen fully understood the context of what the Rebbe was telling.

B'DERECH HAYOSHOR

One day, it was Yud Shevat time, I lifted something heavy and hurt my back.

The pain was extremely debilitating, so I stayed home as I could barely move about and it would have been impossible to do anything in the office.

That night during dinner, I received a phone call from the Rebbetzin. I had an idea why she was calling, but I didn't want to burden her with my problem. The Rebbetzin, however, always had a knack at sensing a problem in my voice and a very tactful way of getting me to divulge what was bothering me. This time too, she asked me what was wrong. I didn't have a choice, and I told her what had happened.

After listening patiently, she said:

"You surely remember the time you took me to an orthopedic doctor in a hospital in New Jersey?" Well now, the Rebbetzin said, she would arrange for an appointment by this doctor for the next day, and she would drive me there.

Indeed, I had once taken the Rebbetzin to New Jersey to visit this doctor.

I told the Rebbetzin that I would not quarrel with her about this, but if she didn't mind, I would prefer to drive the car. I said to her: "if I am able to sit in the car, I will be able to drive too..."

She agreed. The next day we drove to the doctor's office, where he treated me with various injections and soon felt better. Before leaving he advised me to walk straight and upright.

All this time, the Rebbetzin was sitting in the waiting room. When the doctor's visit was done, we drove back to Crown Heights. I took the Rebbetzin home and then went to the office in 770.

I barely arrived at the office, when the Rebbe called on the *mazkirus* intercom and asked for me to come into his room. The Rebbe was standing, and with a smile he asked:



LEVI FREIDIN / via JEM, 193247

THE REBBE LEAVES HIS HOME FOR 770 IN THE MORNING, CHESHVAN 5740.

“How do you feel and what did the doctor tell you.”

I answered that the doctor had instructed me to walk straight and upright.

Smiling, the Rebbe said: “*Ich zog shoin lang az m'darf geyen b'derech hayoshor*, (I have long maintained that one must walk in the upright path).”

A SURPRISE VISIT

I would often drive the Rebbetzin to various places for various purposes. Once, I drove her to a certain destination in Connecticut, and I mentioned to her that we were only twenty minutes away from New Haven, where my brother-in-law, Reb Moshe Yitzchak Hecht, and his wife, my sister Rivkah, had almost completed a brand new, beautiful building for their day school. I asked the Rebbetzin if she would like to see it, and she said yes. It was summer time and I figured that we would get there after five o'clock in the afternoon, when no-one would be around. But as I pulled

up to the building, I noticed my sister, and other people milling around.

My sister noticed the car, then me, then the Rebbetzin. Needless to say she was very surprised and very honored and excited by this unexpected, unprecedented visit. The visit went over very well, with the Rebbetzin walking through the building, and seeing the progress of the construction.

The visit to the shluchim's new school building was very gratifying to the Rebbetzin.

[Ed. note: The story is told that some time later Rabbi Hecht was in *yechidus* and the Rebbe mentioned that he heard “good regards” that the new building was indeed beautiful.]

THE REBBETZIN ALWAYS WAITED UP

On the nights when the Rebbe remained in 770 late into the night receiving people for *yechidus*, I would drive the Rebbe home afterwards. The Rebbetzin would always wait up for the Rebbe until he came home, sometimes till morning.

Generally, upon returning with the Rebbe from the Ohel, I would immediately call the Rebbetzin,



JEM 51653

at home, to inform her that the Rebbe was back at 770.

THE REBBE BELONGS TO THE CHASSIDIM

As is known, the Rebbetzin played a major role in the famous library case, in Kislev of 5746.

We were preparing for three months on the paperwork, documents and depositions needed for the federal trial. Concerned about the stress associated with giving a deposition, I asked the Rebbe if we should try to avoid subjecting the Rebbetzin to having to go through one. Sitting through a deposition is not a pleasant task, especially for an elderly person. But the Rebbe answered that I should not worry about how she would do, she will come through with flying colors.

Her deposition took place in her home, at her dining room table, surrounded by our lawyers, the opponents' lawyers and a whole team of assistants. Before she started, she told me to sit next to her.

Depositions are generally very intimidating as the attorneys try to confuse the witness. However, throughout the entire proceedings the Rebbetzin remained regal and thoroughly composed.

The Rebbetzin was extremely precise and concise in her answers, never uttering an extra word. It soon became very clear to us that the opposing attorneys were very frustrated at not being able to intimidate this witness. In the end, they threw down their pencils in frustration.

At the end of the deposition, one of the lawyers asked bluntly, "Mrs. Schneerson, in your opinion, who did the books in the library belong to, your father or the community?"

In what had become the central statement of the case, the Rebbetzin answered, that the *seforim* belong to the Chassidim, because "my father, and everything he had belonged to the Chassidim."

In the end, the Rebbetzin's deposition was, in fact, a very critical factor in the victory of the case.

THE ONLY CHASSID

One anecdote that really brings out the true greatness of the Rebbetzin, is the courageous stand she took during the events of Shemini Atzeres 5738.

It was five thirty in the morning, and after suffering a heart attack during *hakafos* the night before, the Rebbe's heartbeat was faltering; it was a clear situation of *pikuach nefesh*.

TO HAVE THE COURAGE AND THE *EMUNAH* IN THE REBBE TO MAKE SUCH A DECISION, AGAINST THE OVERWHELMING OPINION OF ALL THE DOCTORS, IN A SITUATION OF CRITICAL *PIKUACH NEFESH*, CAN ONLY BE ATTRIBUTED TO HER STRONG RECOGNITION AND EXTREME *BITTUL* TO THE REBBE

The Rebbe had made it very clear earlier that night, that he wished to remain in 770, despite the insistence of a number of doctors that he be taken to a hospital for treatment. At this point, the doctors said that they had no choice but to rush the Rebbe to a hospital. The situation was dire. With no cardiologists present, with no medicines or medical equipment at hand, there was really no way of treating the Rebbe in his room, and the Rebbe was going through a second massive heart attack.

Just as we were discussing the situation, the Rebbetzin came down from the second floor to check on what was happening. Doctors updated her and told her they decided that they must take the Rebbe to Mt. Sinai hospital even though he said that he didn't want to go.

The Rebbetzin asked, "And what does my husband say?"

The doctors told her that the Rebbe does not want to go to a hospital and wants to be treated in his room.

Being the next of kin, the ultimate decision was hers; the doctors wouldn't be able to overrule her decision.

Without hesitation she said, "Throughout all the years that I know my husband, there was never a moment during which he was not in total control of himself. I cannot allow you to do that against his will."

To have the courage and the *emunah* in the Rebbe to make such a decision, against the overwhelming opinion of all the doctors, in a situation of critical *pikuach nefesh*, can only be attributed to her strong recognition and extreme *bittul* to the Rebbe, way beyond what any of us can imagine.



IN CONVERSATION *with* RABBI MENACHEM JUNIK



RABBI BEREL YUNIK AS A BOCHUR.

My father, Reb Berel Junik a”h, escaped from Russia together with the Rebbe’s mother, Rebbetzin Chana. When he arrived in New York four years later, in 5710, he merited to build a deep connection with the Rebbe and Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, and he would often visit Rebbetzin Chana. Over the years, the Rebbe gave a number of tasks to my father. Being the Chossid that he was, he kept everything very quiet and meanwhile did all he could to be of assistance to

the Rebbe and Rebbetzin.

In merit of this, I was blessed to grow up in a house that revolved around the Rebbe, and *beis harav*. The conversations around our table were often about what was going on by the Rebbe and Rebbetzin, and we all merited to speak to the Rebbetzin and be in her presence. When we grew up, we too took a part in assisting the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin. The following stories are just a sample of the many conversations and encounters that we were *zoche* to have.

A LIFT

Once, when I was a child, some of my brothers and I were walking with my father down Kingston Avenue. As we reached the corner of President Street, we noticed that the Rebbetzin’s car was pulling up towards us. The Rebbetzin noticed us and said hello and acknowledged my father. All of us children had the opportunity to wave to the Rebbetzin, and it was a nice short encounter.

Later, my father had a conversation with her by telephone, and the Rebbetzin surprised my father by apologizing for not offering us a lift home; she said she didn’t want to cause a commotion in middle of Kingston Avenue.

Never had it occurred to us that she would have to offer us a ride; we never expected, nor would my father have accepted such an offer. The very idea was unfathomable. But nevertheless, it bothered her to the extent that she apologized for not doing so. This was the *ahavas Yisrael* and the sensitivity that we saw by the Rebbetzin.

BAR MITZVAH VISIT

My bar mitzvah fell out on Shabbos, 28 Sivan 5739. My father arranged for me to visit the Rebbetzin before *kabbalas Shabbos*. Although I had visited the Rebbetzin’s home and spoken with her on other occasions, this was the first time I spoke to the Rebbetzin alone, and I was very nervous. At the designated time, after davening *mincha* in 770, I walked over to the Rebbe’s house and knocked on the back door. The Rebbetzin opened the door, sat me down by the table, and spoke to me about my bar mitzvah.

Being that it was after Shabbos had begun, the Rebbetzin apologized for not being able to provide some refreshments. I hadn’t even thought twice about it, but here again, the Rebbetzin made sure to mention it and apologize.

During that visit, I also told the Rebbetzin that I would like to say some of the bar mitzvah *maamar* before her, and I said the first few pages. That way, I merited to have the Rebbetzin be part of my bar mitzvah celebration.

UPSIDE DOWN

On the night of Simchas Torah 5746, the Rebbe held an extraordinarily lively farbrengen before *hakafos*. After the first *sicha*, the Rebbe stood up at his place and danced to the *niggun* with much vigor. Later in the farbrengen, the Rebbe finished the wine in his *becher* and then turned it over, and instructed everyone else to do the same. The Rebbe also waved the *becher* from side to side during the



THE REBBE BRINGS A BOTTLE OF WINE IN A PAPER BAG TO THE LIBRARY WHERE HE STAYED WITH THE REBBETZIN FOR SHABBOS, EREV SHABBOS 7 CHESHVAN 5748.

I CONTINUED TO DESCRIBE HOW THE REBBE HAD TURNED OVER HIS *BECHER* AND HAD TOLD EVERYONE TO DO THE SAME. VERY SURREPTITIOUSLY, WITHOUT TAKING HER EYES OFF ME, I NOTICE THAT THE REBBETZIN HAD TAKEN A SMALL BOTTLE OF LIQUOR THAT WAS STANDING ON THE TABLE, AND TURNED IT OVER.

singing, and afterwards he explained the source for his actions according to *nigleh*, comparing this to the upside down cups on the menorah in the *Beis Hamikdash*. All in all it was a very *lebedike* farbrengen.

At the conclusion of the farbrengen, we went to say *gut yom tov* to the Rebbetzin, who was staying at the library next to 770. Dr. Weiss, my father, myself and a few of my brothers were there as well. I was eighteen years old at the time.

We were all still bearing the impact of this unique farbrengen. I was on such a high that I told the Rebbetzin all about it. I described to her how the Rebbe had stood up in his place to dance, and that he was clapping so hard that it was impossible for us youngsters to keep up; I was going on and on

trying to describe how amazing it had been, until she asked me,

“But how was it? Was he okay?”

I had been all excited to describe the physical feat that the Rebbe had done, but then I suddenly realized that the Rebbetzin was obviously concerned about the effect that it had on the Rebbe, and I realized that it would probably be better if I calmed down a bit and toned down the description of the farbrengen.

Then something very interesting happened:

I continued to describe how the Rebbe had turned over his *becher* and had told everyone to do the same. Very surreptitiously, without taking her eyes off me, I notice that the Rebbetzin had taken a small bottle of liquor that was standing on the table, and turned it over. She did it in a way that was almost entirely unnoticeable.

As I said, the atmosphere of the farbrengen was still with us, and Dr. Weiss began singing and dancing; soon enough, we were all dancing together, and the Rebbetzin was watching with a lot of pleasure. She took special notice of Dr. Weiss; after all, he was not a Chossid from birth.

A few days later, I was sent, together with an entire group of *bochurim*, on shlichus to Johannesburg, for a two year period. This was the

second group of *talmidim hashluchim* to South Africa.

We planned to leave to the airport at five in the afternoon, so after *mincha* at 3:15, we stood in Gan Eden Hatachton, and received a *bracha* from the Rebbe. Everyone right away rushed home to prepare for the trip, but I made my way to 1304 President Street, the Rebbe's house, to say goodbye to the Rebbetzin before my two year absence.

I knocked on the back door; the Rebbetzin opened up and invited me inside, we spoke about my shlichus for a few minutes and I told her that with Hashem's help I will see her in two years time. Before I left, she gave me a small bottle of liquor that was sitting on the table, and she said, “Here, take this with you.” I noticed that this was the same bottle that she had flipped on the night of Simchas Torah.

I said goodbye, and began walking down the driveway away from the house. The parting was hard for me; I knew that I would miss being in the presence of the Rebbetzin. Perhaps for that reason, I remembered something that I had wanted to tell the Rebbetzin, and I returned, knocked on the door, and when she opened, we continued the conversation for another few short moments.



THE REBBE AND REBBETZIN'S APARTMENT IN THE LIBRARY.

BEZAGUI

As I began to say goodbye for a second time, she stopped me.

“*Mir zegenen zich nit tzvei mol*—one doesn’t say good bye twice.”

ACCURATE REPORTING

While I was in South Africa, I sent the Rebbetzin letters about everything that was going on; our learning, the *mitzvot*, etc., and I used to get regards about the letters through my father—the Rebbetzin would mention to him that I sent her a letter.

Once, I put together a photo album of pictures of the Lubavitcher *mosdos* in South Africa, and some time later, the Rebbetzin sent it to my father, with a message that she had enjoyed it very much, and had shown it to the Rebbe as well.

There were a number of times that I spoke to the Rebbetzin over the phone from South Africa as well. Once, I had a question about a certain matter that was going on, and I asked the Rebbetzin that perhaps she should mention it to the Rebbe.

I began to give over the question, but there were a number of details involved that were very complicated. The Rebbetzin told me, “*Az m’git epes iber tzu dem man, es darf zein exactly vi m’zagt*—when conveying a message to my husband, it has to be accurately portrayed, with all of the details.” Therefore, she told me, I should write it down in a letter and send it in instead. She didn’t want to skip a detail in giving over a *bakasha* to the Rebbe.

A SIDDUR

As children, my father would sometimes take us to visit the Rebbetzin in her home. The first time we came, I remember coming into the dining room, where the table was set up nicely with food and drink, and we were wondering where to sit down. Noticing our question, the Rebbetzin pointed to one seat at the head of the table, and said, “*Dorten ken men nit zitz’n*—over there one cannot sit,” obviously because that was the Rebbe’s seat.

As we were getting ready to leave, I asked the Rebbetzin for a *siddur* with which to recite *Al Hamichya*, and the Rebbetzin gave me an old Siddur Torah Ohr.

During that visit, my younger brother Dovid, who was quite young at the time, asked the Rebbetzin if she had ice cream. She didn’t; but she told him that she will make up for it, and he can

come over another time to have ice cream. Hearing that, I jumped in as well and said that I will come too; I didn’t want to miss out on the opportunity either. But then the Rebbetzin said no; “You need to be in yeshiva.”

THE LIBRARY

In 5742, the Rebbe and Rebbetzin began spending Shabbos in the library. Later, in 5744, an extension was added to the back of the library with an apartment for them. My brothers and I would be the ones to clean up the rooms and prepare them for the arrival of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin.

Each Shabbos, the Rebbetzin would send the food over with me, and she would also send the same *siddur* that she had given me to *bench* with as a child; then I realized that this was the *siddur* that the Rebbe used at home.

My brothers and I would help the Rebbetzin with different tasks; I used to prepare the Shabbos apartment, and my older brothers even had the merit to help in the Rebbe’s house. This being the case, the Rebbetzin once called my mother and asked if we were helping at home; she didn’t want our helping her to be at the cost of helping at home. Sometimes, the Rebbetzin would ask us as well if we were helping at home.

The Rebbetzin once asked me if I cleaned the tablecloth every week—after every Shabbos I would take the tablecloth to the laundromat; but the Rebbetzin told me not to spend the money on it. She said that the tablecloth doesn’t get dirty over one Shabbos, and I needn’t make that effort.

SHLEIMUS HA’ARETZ

Once on the way back from the library to the house on Motzei Shabbos, I was talking to the Rebbetzin in the car, and I was describing the *farbrengen* that the Rebbe had held that day. This was in the summer of 5742 in midst of the first Lebanon war. During the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe had spoken about the progress of the war. He was very distressed and spoke sharply about the fact that the Israeli Army did not use the full extent of their capabilities to temporarily conquer Beirut and to totally finish the job that they needed to accomplish.

The Rebbetzin joined in sharing with me the same sentiments; she spoke very strongly about the issue, just as the Rebbe had spoken during the *farbrengen*.



IN CONVERSATION *with* **RABBI SHMUEL LEW**

SIMAN BRACHA

My first encounter with the Rebbetzin was a week before my wedding. A few days before, we had entered *yechidus*, and the Rebbe had agreed to my father-in-law, Reb Zalmon Jaffe's request that he be *mesader kiddushin*.

My father-in-law asked the Rebbe if he could invite the Rebbetzin to the wedding as well, and the Rebbe told him that although she would not attend, she would appreciate an invitation. The Rebbe noted that she knew about my father-in-law because they would always "say it with flowers"—he used to send flowers to the Rebbe's home every Yom Tov via Interflora.

Therefore, a week before our wedding, the whole wedding entourage; my future wife and I, along with my in-laws, went to visit the Rebbetzin and invite her to our wedding.

The Rebbetzin served punch in crystal glasses with glass straws, and she invited the *chosson*—me—to fill the glasses.

At one point, my hand went over a glass, and I didn't notice the straw. I spilled the whole punch on the pristine white table cloth; I wanted to bury myself alive.

The Rebbetzin immediately got all excited.

"It's a *siman bracha*," she said.

My father-in-law told me afterwards that she looked so delighted that he was tempted to push over another glass.

That is how sensitive she was to any person that was with her.

STANDING AT THE FARBRENGEN

My daughter would bring *mishloach manos* over to the Rebbe's house on Purim, when she was studying in seminary in New York. When she walked in, she saw how the large table was covered in *shalach manos*; many individuals would send *shalach manos* each year.

My daughter came into the room, and the Rebbetzin told her to eat something. My daughter assured the Rebbetzin that she was not hungry; in fact she had just come from the Purim *seudah*, but the Rebbetzin told her that she should nevertheless eat more.

"One needs to have *koach* to push at the farbrengen," the Rebbetzin exclaimed.

A COFFEE

In Tishrei 5748 (the year of the Rebbetzin's *histalkus*), Simchas Torah was on a Thursday and Friday. As was the *seder* when Shabbos Bereishis was straight after Simchas Torah, the Rebbe



RABBI PINNY LEW

L-R: RABBIS SHMUEL LEW, MOSHE FELLER, AND BEREL BAUMGARTEN, IN CROWN HEIGHTS FOR YUD-ALEPH NISSAN 5732.

farbrenge two times on Shabbos; first at 1:30 PM like a regular Shabbos Mevorchim and then again for a longer time later in the day, towards the end of Shabbos, as a continuation of the Simchas Torah farbrengen that took place on the evening prior, after which the Rebbe gave out *kos shel bracha*.

In order to have a good place in 770 to be able to hear the Rebbe, I came at six o'clock in the morning, and I remained in my place, practically throughout the entire day—Tehillim, *shacharis*, two farbrengens and *kos shel bracha*, besides for a few minutes when my son held the place while I went to make *kiddush* and grab something to eat.

The following day, we went to visit the Rebbetzin in the library. While there, my father-in-law mentioned to the Rebbetzin that I had been sitting in one place for close to twenty hours. Hearing this, the Rebbetzin said:

“You could have come here for a coffee.”

Hearing her offer, which I knew I would never take up, I gave a slight smile. But she said that no, she wasn't joking:

“Come here, knock on the door, and I will give you a coffee.”

The Rebbetzin showed an incredible sensitivity for another individual. We can all learn so much from the way the Rebbetzin cared for and treated others.

BOOKMARKS

I once visited the Rebbetzin together with my children and my in-laws; my sons Yossi and Mendy were then about six years old.

As children often are, they were restless, and began running around the room; they were swinging on doorknobs, and all sorts of other childish things.

I began to get very uncomfortable. In addition to everything they were already doing, I had another major fear:

On a table in the corner of the room there was a pile of *sefarim*, and they were full of bookmarks in different places. I had a terrible fear that they would start pulling out the Rebbe's bookmarks, and I began to feel very anxious.

While I didn't clearly say what I was worried about, I mentioned to the Rebbetzin that perhaps I should take my children home. What she said was very interesting.

She didn't encourage me to keep them there, because in that case I would remain very

HEARING HER OFFER, WHICH I KNEW I WOULD NEVER TAKE UP, I GAVE A SLIGHT SMILE. BUT SHE SAID THAT NO, SHE WASN'T JOKING: “COME HERE, KNOCK ON THE DOOR, AND I WILL GIVE YOU A COFFEE.”

uncomfortable. Neither did she make me feel unwanted. She told me:

“*Vi s'iz eich bakvem*—however you are more comfortable.”

IT'S ALL HERS

Something one always felt in the presence of the Rebbetzin, was a feeling of *malchus*. The Rebbetzin was physically a small woman; but her presence filled the entire room. She was a giant in that sense.

In general, all of the descriptions of the Rebbetzin, and in the stories I just told you, you will always read about her sensitivity and *ahavas Yisroel*. She dealt with an intellectual in an intellectual way, and teenager in a teenage way, and a child in a child's way.

But more importantly is her self-sacrifice. The Rebbetzin literally gave her life away for the Chassidim, and it is possible to say, that everything we have in *dor hashvi'i*, is really in her merit.

The Rebbe would take *yechidus* a few times a week, until the wee hours of the morning. Sometimes these *yechidus*'n could end as late as 6 or 7 AM.

One time, Reb Zalman Gurary suggested to the Rebbetzin, that perhaps the Rebbe should set some sort of limit to *yechidus*, so that he wouldn't come home so late at night.

The Rebbetzin didn't want to think about the idea. She said:

“I wouldn't want to take him away from people who need him.”

Reb Zalman once took the Rebbetzin to see an eye specialist. At the end of the examination, the doctor told the Rebbetzin that there are two options of treatment, and she has the choice to pick whichever one she wants.

In the car ride home, Reb Zalman mentioned that the Rebbetzin would probably ask the Rebbe which treatment to take, but the Rebbetzin said that she would not do so under any circumstances. She did not want to give the Rebbe any *agmas*

nefesh, and therefore, she said, Reb Zalman should advise her instead on the methods of treatment.

Reb Zalman went ahead and wrote the entire story to the Rebbe, asking him what he should tell the Rebbetzin.

In the answer, the Rebbe directed him regarding the treatment, and then added a line. The Rebbe wrote that he should not tell the Rebbetzin that he had written in about it, because it would give her *agmas nefesh*...

The week of the Rebbetzin's *histalkus*, there was a similar story of *mesiras nefesh*.

She wasn't feeling well for a few days beforehand, but she didn't want to see a doctor right away. On Sunday she wasn't ready to see him, because that night the Rebbe held a *yechidus klolis*, on Monday she didn't want the doctors to come over, because she knew that Reb Zalman Gurary would come along—he was very involved in the Rebbetzin's health—and she knew that he gave a *shiur* early Tuesday morning. On Tuesday she said, that since the doctors are after a full day's work, they should first go eat supper, and only afterwards she agreed to see them. In the end, they ran to find something for the doctors to eat before coming to see her.

A few hours later, the Rebbetzin was *nistalek*... T

1. Toras Menachem vol. 14 page 203

DURING THE SHIVA, THE REBBE SAID IN CONVERSATION WITH ONE OF THE VISITORS: "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 TEIKEF UMIYAD MAMOSH!



