

Derher

A Chassidisher

א חסידישער דערהער



Marking 90 Years from the Rebbe and Rebbetzin's Chasuna

Holy Coins

ON THE MINHAG YISROEL
OF CHANUKAH GELT

The Arrest and Liberation of the Mittler Rebbe

חג הגאולה יר"ד כסלו

דאס
איז
דער
טאג



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Rabbi Tzvi Altein

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Rabbi Yossi Kamman

Editor in Chief

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Editors

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Advisory Committee

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Design

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Contributors

Rabbi Yanky Bell • Rabbi Yossi Bendet • Rabbi Koppel Chaiton • Rabbi Levi Dubov • Rabbi Tzemach Feller • Rabbi Yossi Feller • Rabbi Levi Greenberg • Rabbi Mendy Greenberg • Rabbi Mendy Greenberg • Rabbi Zevi Kaplan • Rabbi Levi Katz • Rabbi Levi Levertov • Rabbi Shmuly Levertov • Rabbi Mendel Misholovin • Rabbi Yaakov Raskin • Rabbi Mendy Shemtov

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In memory of our loving uncle
Stuart (Shmuel Yisroel)
 Ben Hersh Leib a"h
 Dedicated by
Shaya and Miriam Rochester

12 TISHREI 5740, LEVI FREDIN VIA JEM 19257



Added Fast. Added Joy.

KISLEV 5740



This article about the events in 770 during the auspicious days of Yud and Yud-Tes Kislev and Chanukah 5740, is culled from the diary of Rabbi Michael Seligson as well as the letters written by Rabbis Mendel and Hirshel Raskin to their father, Reb Leibel Raskin, shliach in Morocco.

THURSDAY, TES KISLEV

Baruch Hashem we were *zoche* to have the Rebbe farbreng many times over the last few days. This afternoon, after returning from the Ohel, the Rebbe announced that there would be a farbrengen in honor of Yud Kislev, *chag hageula* of the Mitteler

Rebbe. During the farbrengen, the Rebbe explained that we must take a lesson from the Mittler Rebbe's *avodas Hashem* and apply it to our own *avoda*. Just as the Mittler Rebbe's Chassidus is known for being in the style of "*rechovos hanahar*"—explaining the concepts of Chassidus at length and with detailed explanations, so too we must incorporate this approach in our own *avoda*.

The Rebbe also spoke about how much the Mittler Rebbe endeared Eretz Yisroel, and how he collected money and sent it to Eretz Yisroel to support the Yidden living there. This was done with great *mesirus nefesh* and personal expense, to the extent that the Mittler Rebbe was eventually arrested as result of these activities. In addition, we find something unique about the Mittler Rebbe's connection to Eretz Yisroel in the fact that he purchased land in Chevron and sent a group of his Chassidim to settle there. The Chassidim were reluctant to leave Lubavitch and live in a place where they could no longer see their Rebbe or hear the Rebbe's Chassidus. The Mittler Rebbe assured them that he would send them his *maamorim* so that they could remain connected whilst in Eretz Yisroel. This expression of love for Eretz Yisroel and its inhabitants is something unique to the Mittler Rebbe.

Speaking about the ongoing negotiations between the Israelis and the Arabs regarding whether the city of Chevron should be given to the Arabs, the Rebbe protested even the premise of the question. "How could one even claim that Chevron doesn't belong to the Jewish people?! It is written explicitly in *parshas Chayei Sarah* that Avraham Avinu purchased Chevron from the people of Cheis and it therefore rightfully belongs to *bnei Yisroel*. This is written in *Torah Shebiksav*, which even the nations of the world accept as binding. Despite this, people speak as though all this has never occurred, and no one dares to protest!"

SHABBOS PARSHAS VAYEITZEI, 11 KISLEV

On the Rebbe's way from his house to 770, he noticed someone wearing just his *tallis* without a coat covering it. The Rebbe motioned to him that he should be wearing a coat.

When the Rebbe entered 770, he asked Mr. Henry¹ if he said *l'chaim* four times like the Rebbe had instructed him to, and Mr. Henry replied that he did. The Rebbe asked him why he wasn't at

the farbrengen on Thursday, to which Mr. Henry replied that he wasn't around at the time and didn't know about the farbrengen. The Rebbe told him that he could make it up at today's farbrengen and that he should say *l'chaim* four times during the farbrengen.

Today's farbrengen was a surprise to many of us and it made big waves. During the second *sicha* people were in awe as the Rebbe revealed many deep concepts and explanations about the Rebbeim.² The farbrengen ended at 4:30 and was followed by *Mincha*. After davening, the Rebbe started the *niggun* "*Nyet Nyet Nikavo*" and energetically clapped his hands.

SHABBOS PARSHAS VAYISHLACH, 18 KISLEV

The Rebbe notified that there would be a farbrengen this Shabbos. During the farbrengen the Rebbe said, "I will speak about the fact that we currently find ourselves in this long and drawn-out *gulus*. Throughout the generations there were so many Jews who gave up their lives *al kiddush Hashem*, yet after all this the *gulus* still continues. We find ourselves in an unbearably dire situation, as the *gulus* only becomes darker still, physically as well as spiritually.³ Although according to Chassidus there is no need for fasting, nevertheless, since *rabbonim* have called for a *taanis sha'os* (a fast of a few hours) as a response to the current situation, I hereby join them in this.

"This is not an order; rather everyone must conduct himself in accordance with the *rav* of his community, hence I am following the *rav* of my community who ruled that we must fast. Since I will be fasting, the ruling of this community is therefore binding on all those who are connected with me although they live elsewhere. There should be an addition in *tefilla* and *tzedakah*, and I recommend that *kapitlach Chof*, *Chof-Bais* and *Samech-Tes* of Tehillim should be recited."

After concluding this *sicha*, the Rebbe asked that the *rav* of Crown Heights, Rabbi Zalman Shimon Dworkin, announce the details of the fast after *Mincha*. The Rebbe then instructed the Chassidim to sing the *niggun* "*Ki Elokim Yoshi'a Tzion*."

SUNDAY, CHAG HAGEULA YUD-TES KISLEV

Just walking into 770 felt like walking into one gigantic farbrengen. The place was filled with guests from around the world, from *rabbonim* to

dignitaries, from distinguished guests to simple folk, all crowded into 770. The downstairs *zal* was packed even more than during Tishrei. The spirit of *Rosh Hashanah L'Chassidus* was so palpable one could almost touch it.

During the *farbrengen*, in the third *sicha* the Rebbe spoke at length about the current situation in Eretz Yisroel. In addition, the Rebbe spoke about the *rav's* ruling about the “*taanis sha'os*” and asked that Rabbi Dworkin take the microphone and announce the details of the fast. Rabbi Groner approached the Rebbe and told him that Rabbi Dworkin had walked out for a minute. The Rebbe smiled and began the *niggun* “*Becho Bat'chu*.” When Rabbi Dworkin returned the Rebbe instructed him to say *l'chaim*, and then the Rebbe smiled and said, “Don't give him more than a *revi's*, because if he drinks more than a *revi's* he won't be allowed to give a (halachic) ruling!” Rabbi Dworkin announced the details of the fast, following which the Rebbe again began the *niggun* “*Becho Bat'chu*” and clapped his hands to the singing.

MONDAY, CHAG HAGEULA CHOF KISLEV

This evening the Rebbe held *yechidus*. Here are a few interesting snippets from the *yechidusen* that took place tonight:

The Rebbe instructed one of the people who came into *yechidus* to use television as a tool to warn the public about the seriousness of the issue of abortions [in 1980, a pro-abortion law was passed in the US -ed.]. The man told the Rebbe that he doesn't believe the masses will be swayed at all through this measure. The Rebbe replied that if this is the case, a conference of *rabbonim* should be called to discuss what must be done to counter this law.

A Jewish professor from South Africa working in the field of Jewish meditation came to see the Rebbe with his wife. The professor handed the Rebbe his *tzetel*. The Rebbe asked him why his *tzetel* didn't include a report about what's happening in South Africa. When the professor responded “because they told me not to write... I hope I did not ask for too many *brachos*,” the Rebbe replied by telling him that Yaakov Avinu asked for many *brachos* and Hashem gave him even more than he asked for. The Rebbe gave him a *brocha* that all his wishes should be fulfilled, and that he should have influence on others, even psychiatrists, concerning meditation.

The Rebbe concluded, “Since it is close to Chanukah, and it is a custom to give *Chanukah gelt*, I will give you that now.” The Rebbe gave one dollar to the professor and one to his wife.

TUESDAY, 21 KISLEV

There was *yechidus* tonight as well. One person who came for *yechidus* told the Rebbe that he publishes a newspaper, and lately damage has been done to his offices.

The Rebbe instructed him to publish a *dvar Torah* on the *parsha*

every week in the paper, so that the *zechus* of the mitzvah will help him. The Rebbe told him that all the damage has been done in the days prior to Yud-Tes Kislev, but Yud-Tes Kislev brings about “*Pada b'shalom nafshi*”—freedom from troubles, and from now on the troubles in his office will end.

THURSDAY, 23 KISLEV

The *rabbonim* called for a *taanis sha'os* to be observed today. Signs were posted all around 770 quoting different rabbinical assemblies from around the world calling for the *taanis sha'os* and instructing everyone to say *kapitlach Chof, Chof-Beis* and *Samech-Tes* in Tehillim.

The Rebbe came in to shul in the morning for *krias haTorah* holding a Tehillim with the *peirush* “*Yosef Tehillos*” authored by the Chida. During *krias haTorah* the Rebbe's face had a very serious expression. The Rebbe looked repeatedly at the *chazzan* and scanned the crowd.

The Rebbe said a few *kapitlach* Tehillim from the Tehillim of the Chida. The Rebbe then closed that Tehillim and opened the Tehillim that is regularly prepared for him and said *kapitlach Chof, Chof-Beis* and *Samech-Tes*. Unlike his usual practice, the Rebbe stayed in shul until the end of davening and Tehillim. The Rebbe then told Rabbi Groner that he



THE ARTICLE IN THE ALGEMEINER JOURNAL ABOUT THE TAANIS SHA'OS THAT THE REBBE ADDRESSED.

JEM / MY ENCOUNTER

חג הגאולה יו"ד כסלו

The Arrest and Liberation *of the Mitteler Rebbe*

On Chol Hamoed Sukkos in the year 5587, a group of Chassidim were farbrenging in Vitebsk. Vitebsk was, and still is, the capital of the Russian region that includes Lubavitch.

Suddenly, Reb Simcha Zelig, one of the prominent Chassidim of Vitebsk, burst into the sukkah and brought shocking news: he had just been in the government offices and overheard a rumor that the Mitteler Rebbe was under investigation.

Nobody wanted to believe it. Besides, it couldn't be true. The Alter Rebbe had helped the Czar in his war with Napoleon by utilizing a network of Chassidim to spy on the French. In appreciation the Czar bestowed on his family the title "Honored Citizen," a title that was passed down from father to son.

Just 13 years earlier, the Mitteler Rebbe moved to Lubavitch from Kremenchug, where he had been since the *histalkus* of the Alter Rebbe. The government in S. Petersburg sent advance notice to all the cities

on the travel route that they should prepare a welcome delegation and help freshen his horses wherever he passed. How could it be that after all that the Mitteler Rebbe was now under investigation? And for what?

By Shemini Atzeres the rumors were confirmed. The secretary of the regional governor met with a delegation of Chassidim. He told them that by the following Thursday the Minister of Justice in S. Petersburg was expected to sign a warrant allowing the police to search and detain the Mitteler Rebbe.



לזכות
הת' מנחם מענדל שיחי'
מאן
לרגל הגיעו לעול מצוות
ט"ז כסלו ה'תשע"ט
נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' שרגא פייוול
וזוגתו מרת דבורה לאה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
מאן



The minister went even further than just signing the search warrant. He ordered that the Mittler Rebbe be brought from Lubavitch to Vitebsk to be interrogated in person.

At this point nobody knew what the charges were or who had slandered the Rebbe. The Chassidim couldn't start preparing a defense without even knowing the charges. All they could do was to meet with the minister and demand that the Rebbe not be transported by the police like a common criminal. He should be allowed to travel by himself, in his

own wagon. Joining the Chassidim in their meeting with the minister were a handful of non-Jewish landowners, who greatly respected the Mittler Rebbe. The minister agreed, and also gave permission to travel slowly due to the Rebbe's health. The journey would take three days instead of the usual two.

Blackmail

By Sunday, a delegation of officers reached Lubavitch and began searching the Rebbe's house. The story was now becoming clearer.

As we know, the Alter Rebbe was *nistalek* while on the road from Liadi, escaping the advancing armies of Napoleon. All the possessions of the entire family had been left behind in Liadi where they were stolen and their houses burned to the ground.

The Mittler Rebbe was left with nothing and cash that they had was used for the travelling costs. The Chassidim knew this. When the Mittler Rebbe accepted the request of the Chassidim in Lubavitch to settle there, he began making his way there and at every stop, local Chassidim

gave generously to *maamad*—the fund dedicated to the expenses of *beis harav*. Upon arriving in Lubavitch the Rebbe had a few thousand rubles, quite a large sum of money. He decided to divide the money between all the members of *beis harav*, who were all in dire poverty.

To divide the money, the Rebbe appointed Reb Pinchas Reizes, Reb Zalmen Reizes, and Reb Shlome Freides.

Years later, when Reb Pinchas Reizes passed away childless, his possessions were transferred to his nephew who lived in Shklov, and who was not the most pleasant person. This nephew was a known gangster and crook, and he got right to work trying to maximize his new inheritance.

He discovered among Reb Pinchas's papers a letter from the Mittler Rebbe, where he tasked Reb Pinchas with the job of dividing the money he had collected on the way to Lubavitch.

This nephew went to the Mittler Rebbe right away with the letter, and demanded a large amount of money. He said that if his demands weren't met he would use this letter to slander the Rebbe to the Russian government; in other words, blackmail.

Of course, the Mittler Rebbe completely refused his demands. He responded by saying that he had done nothing wrong, and what this nephew decided to do with the letter is his business, but this blackmail was not going to work.

Dejected, this individual tried thinking of another plan. There was nothing he could do on his own because he had no connections with the government. What he needed was a partner; someone with the right connections.

And he found it. The Mittler Rebbe's mother, the Alter Rebbe's Rebbetzin, Rebbetzin Sterna, was from a prominent, wealthy family in Vitebsk. The Segal family was famous

in Vitebsk for having "*Torah u'gedula b'makom echad*."

They were *talmidei chachomim*, wealthy, and big *ba'alei tzedakah*, involved in every charitable endeavor in Vitebsk, but they were also bitter *misnagdim*. Besides for being *misnagdim*, they also had a personal grudge against the Alter Rebbe. For years they had tried marrying into the Alter Rebbe's family but were turned down. Even when they offered large sums of money for a dowry, their offers were politely declined.

As a result, they were always on the lookout for ways to harm the Alter Rebbe and his work, making them perfect partners for this individual from Shklov with the letter.

Most importantly, they had connections with Governor Chavansky, the governor of the Vitebsk region.

The Accusations

How could they use this seemingly innocent letter to slander the Mittler Rebbe?

They made one simple change. Where the Rebbe had written that he had in his possession three or four thousand rubles, "*gimmel o' daled alofim*," they simply added a *kuf*. Now it read "*kuf-gimmel o' kuf-daled alafim*," 103,000 or 104,000 rubles, which was an astronomical sum.

How could the Mittler Rebbe have collected such an astounding amount of money in the relatively short trip from Kremenchug to Lubavitch? There could only be one explanation—they told the minister: he is planning a revolution against the Czar. The trip was really an attempt to rile up the masses to overthrow the Czar.

In addition, they said the Mittler Rebbe was sending money to the Sultan of Turkey, at that time the arch nemesis of the Russian Empire. He was trying to bribe the Sultan to convince him to go to war against Russia.

Alternatively, perhaps the money was to finance the war or payment to the Sultan for the protection of Chassidim during the impending war. They weren't so clear on the details but one thing was obvious: sending money to the Sultan was a red flag.

As further proof for their ridiculous claims, they told the minister to measure the shul in Lubavitch. He would find that it was built in the exact same size as the *Beis Hamikdash*, which surely meant that the Mittler Rebbe was serious about his plans to overthrow the Czar.

Preparations

Word quickly spread that the Mittler Rebbe was going to be brought to Vitebsk for questioning. Even before the officers arrived in Lubavitch on Sunday, hundreds of Chassidim streamed in from the surrounding villages for Shabbos. The Mittler Rebbe did not change his behavior at all that Shabbos, and said Chassidus as he normally would.

Meanwhile, there was a great uproar in the whole region. Jews as well as non-Jews began making preparations to greet the Mittler Rebbe and accompany his carriage in and out of the cities he would be passing. It was clear to the police that this was no simple matter, that the Mittler Rebbe was famous and respected even by the non-Jews of White Russia.

When the police officers arrived in Lubavitch, they went straight to the home of the Mittler Rebbe. They stayed there for about an hour and spoke with great respect and deference. They politely asked the Mittler Rebbe to travel with them to Vitebsk to be questioned by the governor, and said that he can arrange his own transportation and travel at a slower pace due to his health.

The officers preferred to leave that day, Sunday, and travel until Liozna;

The Life of a Chossid

Reb Shilem Kuratin

Born: Circa 5645

Passed away: Elul 5679

Chossid of: The Rebbe Rashab

Tomim, Chozer, Mashpia

Reb Shilem Kuratin was born in the year 5645, in the city of Disna, White Russia.

His full name was Meshulam Yedidya Gotlieb. However, he was called to the Torah only as Meshulam Yedidya, “Gotlieb” being a nickname of sorts. But it was the name “Shilem” that he would be known by for the entirety of his short life of 35 years and beyond. Famous as a *mashpia*, mentor and great *maskil*, he was a Lubavitcher Chossid for only 19 of those years.

His revered role and prominent position that he carried until his passing, belie the challenges and struggles of his upbringing; it was far from your textbook description of a *bochur* in Tomchei Temimim.

At the time of his birth, his parents were quite advanced in age; his older siblings already having grown up. This enabled his father to dedicate time to his upbringing and firm *Yiddishe* education. So devoted was he that, despite their poverty, he took every measure to pay for his son’s *melamed*, ultimately selling the family cow to secure the necessary funds. Sadly, his father passed away before his *bar mitzvah*. Through the interference of many circumstances, he almost became a prodigy for the Enlightenment movement; however, in 5661, at the age of 16, he finally joined Tomchei Temimim.

Upon ascending the ranks in the refinement of character and study of Chassidus, he progressively became more and more liked by his peers and others around him. Eventually he was appointed as the *mashpia* and *mashgiach* for the *sedorim* of Chassidus in the yeshiva. Even with this honorable title and responsibility, he continued to conduct himself in a humble and unassuming manner. His sincere and deep care for every Yid was apparent in every encounter he had, even when disciplining the *bochurim*.

The Making of A Mashpia

Shilem’s father passed away at a very young age, and under the care of his older brother who was an adherent of the “*Haskala*,” young Shilem was enrolled in a Gymnasium. Eventually though, he was sent to Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim.

With joy and optimism he arrived in Lubavitch but his clothing stuck out like a sore thumb: He was still dressed in the uniform of the secular school he left.

Concerned he may negatively influence his peers, the *mashpia*, Reb Shmuel Gronem met with the boy and made it clear that he was not interested in having a Gymnasium student in the yeshiva.

Now, while Shilem sat crying outside the *mashpia*’s office, someone felt sorry for him and told the Rebbe Rashab what had happened. When the Rebbe Rashab heard the full story, he decided to allow Shilem to enroll at the yeshiva. Suitable clothing was provided for him, as well as somewhere to stay. The young orphan had finally found a home, in more senses than one. Until this point, he had not realized how much his soul had thirsted for the study of Chassidus. He dedicated himself entirely to his studies, integrating everything he learned into his daily conduct. At first he found Chassidus difficult to grasp, but he persevered eventually overcoming his difficulties. Before long, he became known as one of the most diligent students in the yeshiva.

Focused!

Reb Shilem was known for his powerful levels of concentration. He could sit for hours on end without being distracted by anything going on around him.

One winter evening in the year 5668, the small oven heating the *zal* in Lubavitch sent off sparks in all directions starting a terrible fire. Screaming, running and chaos ensued as *bochurim* began pouring bucket after bucket of water to try and battle the flames. The tumultuous noise reached the ears of the Rebbe Rashab and the Frierdiker Rebbe who came to see what the commotion was all about. After the flames died down and they were able to re-enter the *zal*, they saw the most incredible scene. Standing in a corner, completely oblivious to everything that had been

מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות
לכ"ק אדמו"ר
ולזכות תלמידי התמימים
בכל אתר ואתר
המסורים לעניני כ"ק אדמו"ר
באופן ד"יתיר מבחירה" ממש
נדפס ע"י
הרוצה בעילום שמו

going on, was Reb Shilem. When the fire broke out he was in middle of *Shema* of *Maariv* and his concentration didn't break for even a moment. The Rebbe Rashab turned to his son and exclaimed, "It was for such individuals that Tomchei Temimim was formed!"

This was not a one-off display of his concentration and devotion; there are many similar stories that express the same idea.

Shilem used his unusual powers of concentration and memory for a very important function. He became one of the "*chozrim*" who transcribed the *maamorim* and *sichos* of the Rebbe Rashab, a great privilege in Lubavitch. There were 13 *chozrim* who were divided into three groups. So well did he perform his task as *chozer* that in time he became the leading transcriber.

Not only was Tomchei Temimim created for Reb Shilem but so was a dreaded Russian army conscription center.

In 5667,¹ like many young men his age, he was called for military service. That year, during Simchas Torah, the Rebbe Rashab spoke about the function of a Jew in elevating the sparks of *kedusha* buried in profane places. The Rebbe commented on this statement of the Rebbe Rashab: "This refers to being released from military service."

Call-up took place at the beginning of the winter and those who were due to be conscripted would go to the Rebbe [Rashab] on Simchas Torah to receive his blessing. When Shilem was called up, the Rebbe [Rashab] said: "You will eventually be released, but [in order to liberate] the spark that needs to be elevated by you, you will have to pass through the *oblast*." (Each Russian province, or "*oblast*," had its own conscription office.) He added that the local office, where Shilem was the only Jew to present himself, existed just so that Shilem could pass through it."

Teshuva Without a Gun

During the unstable period between the deposing of the Czar and the Communist seizure of power, murderous gangs of criminals organized wholesale pogroms against the Jews.

The war forced the yeshiva to leave Lubavitch and along with it went Reb Shilem. After settling in Kremenchug with his family and a number of other Jews, they were once abducted by one such gang. They were taken to the outskirts of the city where these murderers were about to execute them when suddenly a miracle took place. Before

the criminals managed to fire their guns, they were forced to run away and Reb Shilem and the others were saved. Afterwards, someone who had heard about this miraculous escape from death said to Reb Shilem: "I would love to attain the level of *teshuva* that you must have achieved when those guns were pointed at you!"

Reb Shilem dismissed the man's words with a wave of his hand and remarked, "When you are standing with your family opposite the muzzle of a rifle, it is very difficult to do *teshuva*. The highest levels of *teshuva* can only be achieved when one has a *tallis* over his head."

Roundabout

The tremendous care Reb Shilem had for the physical needs of each and every *bochur* was legendary.

It happened one evening that a certain *bochur* received a *knas* and was not allowed to eat the yeshiva's food that night. This was not an uncommon punishment at the time and most of the *bochurim* in this situation would have to figure out a solution to their hunger on their own. This particular *bochur*, Reb Shilem knew, would not be able to do so and would therefore be left hungry.

When he came home he asked his wife to prepare supper for this *bochur* but cautioned her that it should be "unofficial."

While the yeshiva was in Kremenchug, Reb Shilem and his family moved into the yeshivah building. (It was dangerous to walk outside in the streets, even during the daytime, due to the constant fighting and rioting.)

On Shabbos Parshas Shoftim 5679, Reb Shilem read the *haftorah* in the yeshiva's *minyan* and then continued davening *barichus* long into the day. When he finally finished davening Reb Shilem joined the Shabbos afternoon seder Chassidus as usual. His Shabbos meal was only eaten after *Mincha*.

Unbeknownst to any of the *talmidim*, Reb Shilem was actually suffering from a terrible illness. That night Reb Shilem passed away at the age of 34, leaving behind his wife and children, and many "orphaned" *talmidim*.² **1**

1. Sefer Hasichos Toras Sholom p. 70 fn. 1.

2. For further reading see Derher Weekly Newsletter, Volume 1, Issues 7-10

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Holy Coins

On the minhag Yisroel
of Chanukah Gelt



"In another ten days, I will ask again for the list of bochurim [who came to seder Chassidus], in relation to a certain matter. I'm saying this now so that there won't be any complaints later that if you would have known you would have acted differently..."

Why do we give Chanukah Gelt?

The definitive origin for the minhag of Chanukah gelt has always been a mystery, as the Rebbe pointed out a number of times. So why do we do it?



Minhag Yisroel practiced by the Rebbeim: The Rebbe would often emphasize the fact that it is an authentic *minhag* practiced by the Rebbeim, which means that it has the power of a *minhag Yisroel* and is therefore part of Torah. Furthermore: being that this practice was shared with the public, it has the authority of *divrei chachomim*, and by fulfilling it we connect with the Rebbeim.¹

In addition, various hints and antecedents for the practice given by the Rebbe and his father Horav Levi Yitzchak:

- **From Shulchan Aruch:** One early hint is from the Magen Avraham in the beginning of *Hilchos Chanukah*. He cites a *minhag* that the poor youth would go door to door collecting money on Chanukah, which is similar to *Chanukah gelt* (though this isn't a considered a *real* source for *Chanukah gelt*, which is not specifically for the poor).²
- **A hint in the Gemara:** In the laws of Chanukah, the Gemara says that it is forbidden to make use of the candles of Chanukah, and it uses the example of coins—that it is forbidden to count coins to the light of the candle. This implies that already then people were giving *Chanukah gelt*.³
- **Like the beginning of education:** The word Chanukah comes from the word *chinuch*, education. Following the efforts of the *Yevonim* to cause Torah to be forgotten, Chanukah celebrates the renewal of Torah and the beginning of education. Just as we give money to a child at the beginning of his education (to encourage him to learn better), so too on Chanukah we give *Chanukah gelt*.⁴
- **The left:** We light candles on the left side of the door, and the *possuk* says, “בשמאלה עושר וכבוד”—on its left side are riches and honor,” and this is expressed in the “riches” and “honor” (which can also refer to money) of the *Chanukah gelt*.⁵
- **In defiance of the Yevonim:** In describing the persecution of the *Yevonim* leading up to Chanukah, the Rambam says, “ופשטו ידם בממונם,” they reached their hands into the Yidden's money. On



THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN RESPONSE TO THE MANICHIM, CLARIFYING THE SOURCES BEHIND GIVING CHANUKAH GELT.



Chanukah we demonstrate that the *Yevonim* did not succeed in contaminating our money; to the contrary, we are utilizing our money to fulfill a *minhag Yisroel*.⁶

- **The significance of luxury:** Just as we give *Chanukah gelt* on Chanukah, we likewise give *matanos la'evyonim* and *mishloach manos* on Purim. But there is a key difference between the gifts of Purim and Chanukah: the *matanos la'evyonim* is for the *needs* of the poor, and even *mishloach manos* is something that can be *consumed and used*. *Chanukah gelt*, on the other hand, is focused on children, who do not need money for their *needs*; instead, it is used on toys and the like—luxuries.

Now, luxuries and riches are something that are essentially higher than the world (as the Gemara says, gold was created merely to be used in the *Beis Hamikdash*).

This is the reason we give *Chanukah gelt*—a luxury—on Chanukah, which signifies a light that is beyond the world, higher than *seder hishtalshelus*; and this is expressed even in the physical world, through the *Chanukah gelt*.⁷

In addition, there are hints for *Chanukah gelt* in Parshas Miketz, which is read during Chanukah:

There are several mentions of money in the *parsha*: the money paid for the food, the double money that was returned to Yosef's brothers, and so on.

There are also several gifts, similar to *Chanukah gelt*: Yosef returned the money to his brothers and he also gave gifts of clothing, especially to his brother Binyomin.⁸



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THE REBBE AT THE TIME PERIOD AROUND THE CHASUNA.



THE REBBETZIN ON THE WEDDING DAY.

Celebrating Ninety Years



דאס איז דער טאג

THE REBBE AND REBBETZIN'S CHASUNA

It was a mere few weeks after the liberation of the Frierdiker Rebbe on Yud-Beis Tammuz 5687 (תרפ"ז). The Frierdiker Rebbe was to leave the Soviet Union and only his family members were granted the necessary papers to come along. When the Frierdiker Rebbe submitted the list of his household to the Soviet authorities to issues exit visas from Russia, they objected to one name only.

"Do you really need to bring a future son-in-law from here?" they asked.


The Frierdiker Rebbe replied, "Such a son-in-law can't be found elsewhere!"

The Rebbe and Rebbetzin's *shidduch* was already several years in the making. Since the Rebbe's early visits to the Frierdiker Rebbe in Rostov years earlier, talk began regarding the proposed *shidduch*, and as the years progressed, the Rebbe began to be identified by the Frierdiker Rebbe as "*hameyu'ad lihiyos chassano*," the future son-in-law of the Frierdiker Rebbe.

The roots of the *shidduch* go back even earlier, to the Rebbe Rashab. Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah related that she had heard from her husband, "For Mussia, we need to look into the sons of Reb Levik."

However, with the difficult situation in Russia, the wedding never materialized. One year after moving to Riga, the Frierdiker Rebbe decided that the time was ripe.






For the Chassidim in that generation, this was much more than a wedding.

The previous years had brought untold hardship and suffering to the Chassidim and to the Frierdiker Rebbe. The once glorious yeshiva in Lubavitch was now fragmented in underground units spread throughout the country. Many Chassidim languished in prison; Yiddishkeit in the Soviet Union had been all but decimated. Just a year and a half earlier, the Frierdiker Rebbe himself had been imprisoned.

Even though the Frierdiker Rebbe had now immigrated to the free world, he was geographically separated from the vast majority of his Chassidim. The financial situation was precarious. What would the future hold?

It was time to rebuild. This wedding would mark the beginning of a new era.



For Chassidim in our generation, this was also much more than a wedding.

The wedding anniversaries of all the Rebbeim are significant, as the Rebbe explained in *sichos*. However, the day of Yud-Daled Kislev is even more unique: It is the day that marked the beginning of our connection to the Rebbe, the *nossi* of our generation. As the Rebbe said, “*Dos iz der tog vos hot mir farbunden amit eich, un eich mit mir*—this is the day that connected me to you, and you to me.”

In simple terms, this day holds the beginnings of *dor hashvi'i*.

This article is a condensed version of the description of the Rebbe's wedding printed in *Early Years*, by **Jewish Educational Media**. Much of the style has been changed to cater to our readership, but the content and basic flow have remained the same.

We would like to express our thanks to Rabbi **Elkanah Shmotkin** and Rabbi **Boruch Oberlander**, the researchers and authors of the book, for allowing us to reprint their work, as well as to Rabbi **Levi Greisman** and the entire **JEM** team for their kind assistance.

The Announcement

At the end of Tishrei 5689 (תרפ"ט), the news spread that the wedding of the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin would be held during the month of Kislev. Two weeks later, the date was set for Yud-Daled Kislev, and Warsaw, the home of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Poland, was chosen to host the wedding. As the Friediker Rebbe explained, "This will give us satisfaction as if it were in some way similar to Lubavitch."¹

Invitations were sent out dated 16 Cheshvan. A generic printed invitation was sent to hundreds of Chassidim, while special copies of a handwritten invitation were sent to prominent individuals, sometimes with the Friediker Rebbe's personal signature and header.

Later, in Warsaw, the Friediker Rebbe sent personal invitations to the Rebbes of Poland who lived in Warsaw and its suburbs: the Gerrer, Sochatchover, Alexander, Radziner, and Zlotopoler Rebbes, and others.

Chassidim throughout the world celebrated with the joyous news, and began preparing for the occasion. They recognized that this would be no ordinary wedding. One Chossid, Reb Yochanan Gordon,² later related a conversation he had with Reb Leib Sheinen, the *rav* of his town, Dokshitz. Reb Yochanan, having just returned from spending Rosh Hashanah with the Friediker Rebbe, was unsure whether to head out again, and he discussed the matter with Reb Leib. Reb Leib responded incisively:

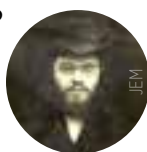
"Imagine, a wedding like this in which all the Rebbes will take part—the Rebbe Rashab, the Rebbe Maharash, the Tzemach Tzedek, the Mittler Rebbe and the Alter Rebbe; possibly even the Baal Shem Tov—how can you consider missing an opportunity like that?!"

Upon hearing this, Reb Yochanan later wrote to the Friediker Rebbe, "I went immediately and borrowed money for the trip. I hope to never

forget what I saw and felt at that wedding for the rest of my life."

Such a grand affair was going to cost a great amount of money. The Friediker Rebbe's secretary, Reb Chatshe Feigin, wrote an emotional letter to Reb Yisroel Jacobson in New York requesting help to enable the Friediker Rebbe to host a celebration befitting the occasion.

Following his request, Chassidim in many communities in North America including Montreal, Baltimore, Chicago and New York, as well as in London and Kharkov, assisted by sending funds.



REB YOCHANAN GORDON



THE LETTER FROM REB YOCHANAN GORDON TO THE FRIEDIKER REBBE, DESCRIBING HIS DECISION TO TRAVEL TO THE REBBE AND REBBETZIN'S CHASUNA.

Invitations

During the famous farbrengen marking the Rebbe and Rebbetzin's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, on Yud-Daled Kislev 5714,³ the Rebbe described the special attention the Frieddiker Rebbe devoted to the text of the wedding invitations:

“Before the wedding of my sister-in-law [Rebbetzin Sheina], my father-in-law instructed that the text of her wedding invitation be a copy of ours. In response to my question, the Rebbe explained that the text was taken from the invitation to his own wedding.



THE WEDDING INVITATION.



AN INVITATION TO THE WEDDING, WRITTEN IN THE FRIEDDIKER REBBE'S KSAV YAD KODESH.

Preparations

In preparation for the wedding, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka departed for Warsaw together with her mother, Rebbetzin Nechama Dina, around two weeks before the wedding. The rest of the family remained in Riga, where the *tenoim* and *ufruf* were held.

On the eve of 6 Kislev, the *tenoim* were signed in the presence of a small group of people. Two Chassidim were honored to be *eidim*: Reb Mordechai Cheifetz and Reb Chatshe Feigin.

The next day, the Frieddiker Rebbe wrote a heartfelt letter to the Rebbetzin:

“Mazal tov to you, my dear daughter; mazal tov! Last night we conducted the *tenoim* in an auspicious time in the presence of a few close friends.”

In observance of the custom to donate food for the poor prior to a wedding, the Frieddiker Rebbe sponsored free lunch in the Riga Jewish soup kitchen in the days leading up to the wedding.

The Ufruf

In a letter to his family and other Chassidim in Russia, Reb Eliyahu Chaim Althaus⁴ records the events of this day (due to the length of his writing, we have condensed certain parts, while preserving the original style):

“The *chosson* was called up to the Torah on Shabbos, Yud-Alef Kislev, with great fanfare. At about one o'clock, the Rebbetzin [Shterna Sara] prepared a *kiddush* in her ground floor apartment for approximately 100 people.



REB ELYE CHAIM ALTHAUS

“As the train began to move, the crowd followed us, dancing alongside. How beautiful and heartfelt was this emotional scene.”

“The *kiddush* lasted about one-and-a-half hours, where we sang many powerful *niggunim*. After *Mincha*, the Shabbos meal took place in the Rebbe’s apartment, with some 70 invited guests.

“The Rebbe delivered a *maamar*, *dibbur hamaschil* ‘*Vechol Banayich*,’ a wondrous *maamar* which included both deep concepts and practical advice in *avodas Hashem*. It lasted about one-and-a-half hours, followed by prolonged dancing. We celebrated greatly—rejoicing and trembling as one: Observing the Rebbe’s great joy, we, his Chassidim, rejoiced along with him. The Rebbe, in turn, sang, danced and rejoiced with us.

“For me personally, the celebration of this special moment surpassed the rejoicing of the days to follow. Why so? I will never know. But I know this is how I feel in my heart. Perhaps because this was the beginning of the festivities, the opening for all the celebration to follow—this elation that contrasted so starkly with the painful events that preceded it not long before.

“After a *sicha*, the Rebbe rose with a cup of wine in his holy hands. His face turned from white to red. His eyes filled with tears, as he looked heavenward:

“Now I would like to say *l’chaim* for my brethren who are exiled in Russia.’ In a powerful voice he delivered a long and deep *brocha*...

“This meal with the Rebbe and his Chassidim continued deep into the night. I have no doubt—were it not for the need to prepare for the next day’s journey, it would not have concluded before midnight, as it did. Such an event has never been seen or heard of before; it was a taste of *Olam Haba*.”

Journey to Warsaw

Reb Eliyahu Chaim describes the journey:

“On Sunday, 12 Kislev, the Rebbe departed Riga for Warsaw with his family. At the train station, he was greeted by thousands of Chassidim, acquaintances, and well-wishers who had come



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