

# "Ich For Doeh Mit Eich"

An interview with  
**Rabbi Sholom Ber Lispkar**



RABBI LIPSKAR RECEIVES LEKACH FROM THE REBBE AFTER YECHIDUS WITH MEMBERS OF MIDF, 8 TISHREI, 5749.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 252390

## The Rebbe's Mekuravim

“Personally, I try to avoid entering the Rebbe’s room,” shares Rabbi Lipskar. “The first time I entered the Rebbe’s personal study, referred to as *Gan Eden Haelyon*, after Gimmel Tammuz, I was struck by the room’s modest size. Over the years, when I merited to have many *yechidusen* with the Rebbe, the walk from the door to the Rebbe’s desk seemed a mile long. We didn’t perceive the place as physical at all. The Rebbe’s presence transcended the reality of the space; it was like *‘makom haaron eino min hamidah.’* And that is a feeling that I want to retain.”

We sat down with Rabbi Sholom Ber Lipskar, to hear about his youth in 770 and his early years on shlichus, when he merited to receive extensive guidance from the Rebbe.

“I’ve learned over the years of my shlichus that one of the most impactful things I could do with my *mekuravim* was to bring them to the Rebbe. Over the years, *baruch Hashem*, we’ve brought countless Yidden to the Rebbe, before and after Gimmel Tammuz, where each one was impacted in a significant way and the impact continued to be priceless.”

Some of these individuals experienced open miracles. One couple who didn’t have children for many years joined a group of benefactors traveling to New York for dollars. They asked the Rebbe for a blessing for a child, but the Rebbe gave them two dollars, saying, “This is for the children.”

“The wife was so shaken by the experience,” Rabbi Lipskar relates, “she needed to be supported as she left the Rebbe and was taken to Ess & Bench to calm down. Nine months later she gave birth to twins, after which she had two more sets of twins. Needless to say, their Yiddishkeit

was strengthened and they became dedicated Chassidim of the Rebbe.”

In other instances, Rabbi Lipskar witnessed how the Rebbe personally motivated and demanded of *mekuravim* to enhance their commitment, both on a personal and financial level.

In 5734\*, the Federation’s “Young Leadership Cabinet” of the tri-state area came for a *yechidus*, and Rabbi Hodakov arranged that a few young and eloquent shlichim join the group. Among them was Rabbi Lipskar.

During an hour-and-a-half of intense discussion, the Rebbe answered questions about Russian Jewry, fundraising, spreading Yiddishkeit, *chinuch* and the Holocaust. Towards the end of the *yechidus*, the Rebbe said that he hoped he answered all the questions adequately and satisfactorily. “But now,” the Rebbe said, “I’d like to ask you something.

“I’m 72 years old,” the Rebbe said. “Before I go to sleep tonight, I hope and pray to Al-mighty G-d that when I wake up tomorrow morning, I will do one thing more or one thing better than I did until today. And for that reason, I have the right to ask you to do the same.”

“People always left the Rebbe’s room impacted,” Rabbi Lipskar explained. “But for us Chassidim, especially as *bochurim*, it took on a whole new dimension. When I was a *bochur* in 770, we prepared for *yechidus* for at least a week before. On the day of *yechidus*, you fasted and spent time alone, *b’hisbodedus*. It was a very serious matter. I vividly remember the feeling of standing at the Rebbe’s door, about to be called in. It was an awesome feeling.”

We asked Rabbi Lipskar to share some details of his personal *yechidusen*, and he shared the following story.

## “*Iskafya* means to not waste your time, to not do what you want, and to eat healthy.”

“When I was a 17-year-old *bochur* in 770, I began to observe *iskafya* to an extreme degree, as a result of learning Chassidus and hearing the stories of Chassidim in Russia.

“The Rebbe said to me in *yechidus* that *iskafya* in our day isn’t achieved through physical deprivation. *Iskafya* means to not waste your time, to not do what you want, and to eat healthy. He said that this type of behavior brings to *atzvus*, not *merirus*, and that I should approach my *mashpia* to better understand the difference. Afterwards, Reb Yoel learned with me Perek 26 in Tanya.”

## The Long and Short Way

During the *yechidus* with the Federation leaders, the Rebbe made a point to them which has served as a guiding light for Rabbi Lipskar in his shlichus.

“The Rebbe repeated the Gemara’s story of the long and short way to Yerushalayim. There are two ways of raising funds, the Rebbe explained to them. The short and long way is to publicize a touching story, and, with the help of a good spokesman, the donor will be impressed and write a check. But the following year, if a new emergency arises in another environment, it will take precedence over your project. Although you received your financial needs in the short term, you haven’t ensured any long term progress. The long and



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RABBI LIPSKAR RECEIVES KOS SHEL BRACHA FROM THE REBBE, CIRCA TISHREI 5724.

short way, the Rebbe said, is to make the benefactor own the project, where it becomes his project. In that case, you won't need to approach him again. "Whatever he gives, he gives to himself."

The Rebbe expressed a similar sentiment when Rabbi Lipskar accompanied a well-known judge (Judge Weinstein) to the Rebbe for dollars, where he informed the Rebbe that he would share the Rebbe's views on imprisonment with the Federal Sentencing Commission. That wasn't enough for the Rebbe. "But you will tell them as your personal views also," the Rebbe emphasized.<sup>1</sup>

Another important directive Rabbi Lipskar received from the Rebbe in his shlichus was "*Kol d'poshit maale tfei*—the simpler, the better."

"This was after a certain benefactor was very inspired by our work and offered me an unlimited amount of

money to spread 'my' message of an accessible Yiddishkeit in a massive campaign across the country. The Rebbe rejected the idea outright. National media campaigns might be nice, but real impact is made organically, from the ground up, when a shliach makes a real connection with a person, who goes on to form more connections himself. That's how real change and success happens."

Today, The Shul of Bal Harbor is one of the most famous Chabad Houses in the world, with thousands of Jews coming through its doors on a regular basis. The Shul's foundation began in the year 5741\* through the help of an individual who already had a connection to the Rebbe.

"When we moved to Bal Harbor, most people were against us, if not just apathetic. But there was one Jew, a friend, Mr. Sam (Shmuel) Greenberg, who while in *yechidus* was asked by

the Rebbe why no shul existed in Bal Harbor. He provided us with our beginning, arranging for a space that he had through his real estate connections."

When Rabbi Lipskar came for a *yechidus* with one of his main supporters, the Rebbe noted that The Shul was a pilot project which could serve as an example for many other locations because Florida draws visitors from all over the world, specifically mentioning the entire US, Canada, Central and South America and Europe. People could observe the community in Bal Harbor and then implement those same ideas in their home communities. ("We once received a similar message about the Aleph Institute," says Rabbi Lipskar. "When one of our staff told the Rebbe that she worked for Aleph, the Rebbe said, "*Aleph iz doch der vegveiser far ale andere osios. Ba ze zol azoy oich zein*

der Aleph—Aleph is the lodestar for all the other letters. May this Aleph also be so.”)

When Rabbi Lipskar first wrote to the Rebbe about the idea to open The Shul in Bal Harbor, the Rebbe responded, ‘נכון הדבר—it is an appropriate idea.’

“Over the years, we received countless *brachos* from the Rebbe for

our projects and the Rebbe always took an interest in our activities. Rabbi Sholom Duchman once reported to the Rebbe that he had witnessed a very well-attended Torah class, saying, ‘I hope it will give the Rebbe *nachas ruach*.’ The Rebbe underlined the last two words, and added ‘מאוד.’”

Shortly after he started The Shul and the Aleph Institute, the Rebbe sent

Rabbi Lipskar a three thousand dollar check (for Mivtza Tefillin, Mivtza Pesach and all other *mivtzoim*, one thousand each), but he didn’t want to cash the check as it was signed by the Rebbe. He soon received a call from Rabbi Hodakov.

“It seems that you are doing well financially,” Rabbi Hodakov said.

## Mel Landow

One of the Rebbe’s most profound connections with a *baal habos* of Rabbi Lipskar was with Mr. Mel Landow, a philanthropist who built much of Chabad in Florida in those early years.

“This connection began in a way which was totally *himeldik*,” says Rabbi Lipskar.

During an early stage in Mel’s relationship with Rabbi Lipskar, a sudden call arrived to Rabbi Lipskar’s office from Rabbi Hodakov.

“The Rebbe wants to know if Mel Landow puts on tefillin.”

Rabbi Lipskar answered in the negative. Although he had convinced him to put on tefillin during their first encounter (“He was playing tennis, so I made a ‘bet’ with him that if he loses, he needs to put on tefillin with me,”) Mel had said not to ask him again.

Suddenly Rabbi Lipskar heard the Rebbe’s voice on the line. “I jumped out of my seat in shock; I had never heard the Rebbe’s voice on a phone-call before.”

A three-way conversation ensued, with the Rebbe quietly telling Rabbi Hodakov what to instruct Rabbi Lipskar.

“*Men zol leigen mit em tefilin*,” the Rebbe said.

When Rabbi Lipskar said he had tried and Mel had refused, the Rebbe said to tell him “*Men fort oifen Ohel*.”

“Tell Mr. Landow to put on tefillin, because the Rebbe is going to the Ohel,” Rabbi Hodakov repeated.

Rabbi Lipskar was somewhat confused about the connection, but he responded, “I’ll ask him to.”

“*Sheine tefillin*,” the Rebbe said quietly.

“Make sure you have nice Tefillin,” Rabbi Hodakov said.

Rabbi Lipskar didn’t have new tefillin on hand.

“*Eigene*,” the Rebbe said.

“Your personal tefillin are not nice?” Hodakov asked.

“*Gute sheidlach*,” Rabbi Lipskar heard.

“Your cases are probably worn out, so find new ones that look nice,” Rabbi Hodakov instructed.

“*Modia zein*.”

“Let me know what happened,” Rabbi Hodakov concluded.

“I ran to the Judaica store and asked if he has new tefillin cases,” says Rabbi Lipskar. “He didn’t, but he did have tefillin available for \$50. I paid him, left the Tefillin and took the boxes. The guy thought I was crazy.”

Rabbi Lipskar called Mr. Landow and arranged an immediate meeting for an urgent matter.

“I have a very important request,” he said when he arrived. “I want you to put on tefillin.”

“I already told you, it’s not my thing.”

“But today is a very important day,” Rabbi Lipskar explained. “The Rebbe is going to the resting place of his saintly father-in-law, the previous Rebbe, to say special prayers, and if you would put on tefillin, I’ll let him know.”

Mel’s attitude changed immediately. “Let’s do it.”

Rabbi Lipskar was stunned.

“Afterwards, I called *mazkirus*. They had been waiting for my call and by then the Rebbe was already at the Ohel. Rabbi Krinsky told me that when he went inside to inform the Rebbe, the Rebbe smiled broadly. A few days later, the Rebbe purchased a new pair of tefillin for him.”

Later, the Rebbe asked Professor Branover while he was in *yechidus* to encourage Mr. Landow to come for *yechidus* with his wife.

“He was somewhat hesitant, but he ultimately acquiesced, and we arrived together in 770 late one Thursday night. Mel brought along plans he had to build a grandiose health club and tennis convention center in Eretz Yisroel, hoping to share with the Rebbe his exciting new investment in the Holy Land. In fact, he

That couldn't have been farther than the truth, and Rabbi Hodakov told him in no uncertain terms that the check must be cashed or returned to the Rebbe.

"In addition to constant encouragement, the Rebbe also ensured that the institution be run properly. He instructed me, for example, to make sure that everything

was punctual; the announced time for *tefillos* should be carefully observed."

## First Encounters

Rabbi Lipskar's early childhood was spent in the DP camps of Schwabisch Hall and Feldafing, where *cheder* was taught by Reb Elya Chaim Roitblat in a basement and recreation meant walking long distances to milk cows for *cholov Yisroel*. He was born only

20 days before his family's escape from Russia on the famed *eshalones*, where, for lack of a proper passport, he was concealed in a suitcase by his grandfather, Reb Zalman Duchman.

"During that journey, my father, Reb Eliyahu Akiva Lipskar, merited to assist Rebbetzin Chana," says Rabbi Lipskar, "and with the Rebbe's approval, we engraved on his *matzeiva*,



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was traveling the next morning to meet with Minister Pinchas Sapir of Eretz Yisrael to work on making the plans a reality. When he finally entered the Rebbe's room, he was sorely disappointed."

The Rebbe posed Mel with a question:

"When you welcome guests into your home, do you bring them into your living room and library, or into your bedroom and bathroom?"

"The public quarters, obviously."

"So why are you building bathrooms in Israel? Why don't you build a library?"

"After an hour-long *yechidus*, he walked out devastated," relates Rabbi Lipskar. "He told me, 'The Rebbe knocked me out.' He had come with a profound respect for the Rebbe, but he didn't expect anything like that. Rabbi Hodakov called to find out his reaction, and I told him the truth."

Soon Rabbi Hodakov called back with the Rebbe's response, as retold by Rabbi Lipskar:

"I met a person last night that A-Imighty G-d gave him merits that even I don't have. Hashem gave him the merit to open the spigots, the faucets through which he

will bring back 100,000 children to the Jewish faith. The foundations of buildings are not what you see, but that which is at the origin of those foundations. The pillars are what you see, but the foundations are what hold up the pillars." The Rebbe referred to Mel as one of those foundations.

Rabbi Lipskar called Mel and told him the Rebbe's message, and he was very touched. The next day, Mel received a letter by special delivery mail.

"Reb Mordechai Shaul,  
Greetings and blessings.

"Frankly, I had wondered what your reactions might be to my "un-American" manner of welcoming you. For, the accepted American way, if I am not mistaken, is to greet one with a shower of compliments and praise, even if not always fully merited. In your case, of course, it would have been very well deserved credit, for I was fully aware of your accomplishments and generosity on behalf of the Lubavitch work in your community..."

"My guiding principle in this case, as when meeting with people in general, is the bon mot I heard from my father-in-law of saintly memory: 'When two Jews meet, they should not be content with the benefit that the meeting brings to each of them, but they should immediately be concerned with the prospect of bringing a benefit to a third Jew, a fourth, and to as many Jews as possible.' Moreover, I was hopeful that you would accept my suggestions in the right spirit, precisely because you have already made a magnificent start..."

"This was the beginning of an extensive connection to the Rebbe," Rabbi Lipskar relates. "He received some 25 personal letters from the Rebbe. He built the yeshiva, and gave a tremendous amount of money to Chabad. When the Rebbe saw him by dollars, the Rebbe told him something very special: 'Landow Yeshiva has many *talmidim*, and everyone [studying there] has the name that he is a *talmid* in Mel Landow's yeshiva.'"<sup>2</sup>

עזר הרבה בהצלת אמו של כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א—he greatly assisted in the rescue of the Rebbe's mother.”

Upon the Rebbe's instruction, his father searched for immigration opportunities in North America, ultimately receiving a Canadian visa, and they set sail in 5711\* (the ship they sailed on was so rickety that it sank on its return trip).

“We settled in Toronto, where my father soon became a *melamed*, on the Rebbe's suggestion. Our first real welcome to ‘Jewish America’ was when we unsuspectingly walked into a Reform temple to attend the bar mitzvah of a relative who had immigrated and assimilated much before our arrival. Upon entry, my father was informed that he wouldn't be allowed to wear his tallis or

yarmulke, and then we noticed men and women sitting together. It hit us like a ton of bricks; we immediately made our way to the exit.”

The family made trips to the Rebbe twice a year—each Sukkos-Simchas Torah and Yud-Beis Tammuz. Rabbi Lipskar shared memories of hearing the Rebbe teach the *niggunim* on Simchas Torah night (“*Chazarah* on the niggun would go on for several hours, often in Reb Yoel's home”), participating in the *farbrengens* from under the Rebbe's table (“There was literally no space for us anywhere else”), and helping his grandfather bring kettles of hot water to 770 after the *farbrengens* were over (“The rain would seep in through the canvas cover of *shalash*, and everyone would be shivering cold”). A special moment of the trips would also be visiting Rebbetzin Chana, whom they knew well. She would converse with the adults and give candies to the children.

An interesting anecdote from those trips that Rabbi Lipskar shared was his curiosity to see the Rebbe's home.

“My uncle, Reb Yankel Lipskar, had a grocery store, and his children would make deliveries to the Rebbe's house. On this one occasion in 5717\*, they allowed me to make the delivery. I nervously knocked on the front door and the Rebbetzin opened; she showed me where to place the box and then tipped me a quarter, which was a lot of money in those days; it was worth several soda cans... As soon as the door closed behind her, I fled down the stairs.”

The highlight of the visit was the *yechidus* before they departed.

“When I was young, the Rebbe would smile at us and ask us if we knew *brachos* or Shema, but my first real conversation with the Rebbe was when I was nine-years-old. The Rebbe asked me which *perek* Gemara I was learning, and I responded that I had



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD

RABBI LIPSKAR AT A COMMUNITY DINNER, CIRCA 5730S



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD

RABBI LIPSKAR GIVES A CLASS FOR INCARCERATED JEWS IN MIAMI, 5746.

just learned a portion of Hamafkid by heart.

“Nu, say it,” the Rebbe said.

“I was very nervous, but I recited the entire daf and a half. It took several minutes, and the Rebbe listened to me closely the entire time.”

Even as a child, Rabbi Lipskar would often write directly to the Rebbe, something he was taught to do by his grandfather, Reb Zalman Duchman. The Rebbe would usually acknowledge them with a letter signed by Reb Eliyahu Kwint<sup>3</sup> of *mazkirus*, and on one unique occasion, he received a letter with the Rebbe’s personal signature.

## Learning in New York

Rabbi Lipskar arrived in New York to learn in Tomchei Temimim on Bedford & Dean when he was 15-years-old, where he joined the class of Leibel Kaplan, Leibel Shapiro,<sup>4</sup> Shlomo Zarchi, Zev Katz, and others.

“Whenever there was special news from 770, we would race the 20 minute walk from Bedford & Dean to 770, jumping into a *mikveh* that was on the way. But we went to 770 primarily on Shabbos, and for the Rebbe’s farbrengens.

“We came to learn in 770 in Elul 5723\*. Our relationship to the Rebbe was unique in those days. Although we wrote to the Rebbe sparsely and had *yechidus* only once a year, we were still a tight little group, where everyone was on a first name basis. Davening was upstairs, which is a tiny area.”

The Rebbe would come in for Mincha, Maariv and *kriah*. Two *bochurim* would also have the opportunity to accompany the Rebbe home from a distance each evening. “Sometimes when he would turn the corner, he would look back to see us.”

“We would remain in 770 until the end of *yechidus*,” Rabbi Lipskar says, “until one in the morning or later. When important people would come,

# “We asked him what the Rebbe said. You won’t understand anyway.”



RABBI LIPSKAR (FAR LEFT) WATCHES AS THE REBBE RECEIVES AN ALIYA, CIRCA 5724.

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they would lock the door to the *zal* to keep the *bochurim* away, but we would make sure to catch the individual at some point and ask him what the Rebbe said.

“I’ll share two notable incidents.

“Reb Chaim Zimmerman was a brilliant and eccentric *rosh yeshiva* in Chicago who wrote a *sefer* called ‘Agan Hasa’har’ about the international dateline. He only printed 50 copies, because he felt that nobody would understand what he writes anyway. He sent one book to the Rebbe even though he wasn’t a Chossid; he was known as a strong supporter of Rabbi Hutner.

“He came for *yechidus* after Mincha one day. He was told to wait in *Gan Eden Hatachton*, and when the Rebbe returned from Mincha he had his *yechidus* there. He paced the entire hallway back and forth while talking to the Rebbe, who was standing in the doorway of his office.

“He came out after a significant amount of time, and we asked him what the Rebbe said. ‘You won’t understand anyway,’ he said. ‘One thing I could tell you: You don’t know what you have here. You don’t understand what you have.’

“On another occasion, Arik Sharon came to the Rebbe, some time after his son was accidentally killed. We asked him to tell us something about the Rebbe when he came out, and he said as follows:

“The Rebbe isn’t like the IDF Chief of Staff, nor like the generals; he is like every soldier combined in one person. The Rebbe knows what is going on behind every tree in El Arish!”

## With the Rebbe's Brachos

“When I went into *yechidus* in Av 5727\*, I asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* that nobody should bother me about *shidduchim*, as I had just turned 21. The Rebbe responded that





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I should push them off until after Rosh Hashanah. *B'hashgacha pratit*, a *shidduch* was suggested right after Rosh Hashanah, and we soon got engaged.

“I spent a year in kollel upon the Rebbe’s instructions, but then the Rebbe said it was time to go. He said to bring suggestions of places for shlichus, and of the three places I proposed, he chose Miami and instructed us to be involved in education.

“When we moved to Miami in 5729\*,” says Rabbi Lipskar, “it was the type of place that if a *yeshiva bochur* was caught visiting, he would be immediately expelled from his yeshiva.

It was a spiritual desert. In *yechidus* before we left, my wife mentioned that although she is fully dedicated to the Rebbe’s mission, leaving her family and friends behind was going to be difficult. The Rebbe looked up with a smile and exclaimed, *Ich for doch mit eich! S’zol zein b’simcha. Oib nit b’simcha, vos darft ir mir mitnemen*—I’m traveling with you! You should go joyfully. If you won’t be joyful, why do you need to take me along?”

“Looking back, there is no way to explain our shlichus if not for the fact that the Rebbe came along with us, literally. This was something we experienced at every step of the way.”

There were several stories of open miracles.

Rabbi Lipskar’s first job in Florida was to run the day school that had been established by Rabbi Avraham Korf several years earlier. Mrs. Lipskar served as a teacher.

“Our school building was declared a fire hazard, so we paid a fireman to sit in the lobby during school hours every single day, where he got to see my wife and everyone else in the school.

“One night, I was out at a meeting when a fire started in my apartment. A lock malfunctioned, my wife couldn’t get out of the apartment, and she passed out from smoke inhalation.



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RABBI LIPSKAR AND A SUPPORTER WITH THE REBBE, 7 TISHREI, 5752.

When the fire department found her, she was already in a very severe situation. Amazingly, she was found by the same fireman from the school. He took off his own mask and put it on her, a selfless deed which, we discovered later, actually saved her life.

“When she began to recover, a plastic surgeon offered to do cosmetic surgery over her burns, but the Rebbe told her to reject it outright. During our next *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked if she still had scars from the burns, and when my wife answered in the affirmative, the Rebbe said, *‘Noch a sreifah vert men reich—One becomes rich after a fire...’*

“Miraculously, my wife healed completely.”

Another medical miracle occurred with Rabbi Lipskar himself:

In 5732\*, Rabbi Lipskar was going through some medical tests in the hospital, when he didn’t wake up after being administered anesthesia. In the midst of the mayhem of doctors and nurses around his bed, Mrs. Lipskar ran to call *mazkirus* and inform the Rebbe.

Rabbi Hodakov soon called back and said he had a message from the Rebbe for Rabbi Lipskar, and asked that he be put on the line.

“He’s in a coma,” Mrs. Lipskar reminded him.

Rabbi Hodakov was insistent. “I have a message for him from the Rebbe; please put him on the line.”

Mrs. Lipskar transferred the call from the nurse’s station to the hospital room and pressed the phone to the unconscious Rabbi Lipskar’s ear.

**“He’s in a coma,  
Mrs. Lipskar  
reminded him.”  
“Who made you  
the boss?”**



RABBI LIPSKAR HELPS  
AN INCARCERATED  
JEW DAWN TEFILLIN.

ALEPH INSTITUTE

## Aleph Institute

Rabbi Lipskar relates:

During one of the farbrengens during my “temporary leave of absence,” the Rebbe spoke strongly about the need to help Jews in prison, who were thirsting for Yiddishkeit (for some reason, this *sicha* wasn’t included in the *hanacha*).

While I was in *yechidus* the week before, the Rebbe said, “In regards to your shlichus, Hashem will give you a *machshava tovah*...” Hearing the *sicha*, I thought about establishing an institution for prisoners, and I felt that was what the Rebbe meant.

We called it Aleph, because the Rebbe spoke about the concept of adding an Aleph to the word *gola*, thereby making it *geulah*. It was also perfect in a practical sense, because there was significant anti-Semitism in the prison system, and we wanted a name and symbol that Jewish prisoners would recognize but would not be recognizably Jewish to anyone else.

The Rebbe’s basic guidance was to bring in as much Torah learning as possible, and that they should always have all the basic needs to lead a Jewish life; they shouldn’t have to work on Shabbos, and so on.

The Rebbe also ensured that we never shame anybody by using personal names in fundraising and so on. In 5745\*, when I brought a group of prisoners to the Rebbe for Shabbos, I had arranged for a group of *bochurim* to reserve a table for the group at the farbrengen, but Rabbi Groner came down looking for me before the farbrengen began and said that the Rebbe instructed that they shouldn’t sit together, and nor would he give us a bottle of *mashke*, “Although they were more worthy than anyone else,” so as not to draw attention to them.

We once held a meeting of our board of directors in Crown Heights, and the Rebbe davened Mincha downstairs in their honor. Rabbi Groner also gave me a hundred single dollar bills to distribute to each of the attendees, as the Rebbe’s personal participation.

We printed a special *siddur* to give each participant, and we sent one to the Rebbe as well. That afternoon, when the Rebbe left for home, he was already on the sidewalk when he turned around, returned to his room, and retrieved our little *siddur*.

“The next thing I hear,” Rabbi Lipskar says, “is Rabbi Hodakov telling me that Professor Branover is coming to Miami to give a lecture, and the Rebbe wanted us to welcome him and care for him...”

“On a side note: The doctors claimed that because of defects in my heart, I would end up in a wheelchair by the age of 40. When I repeated it to the Rebbe, the Rebbe waved his hand in dismissal, saying ‘Ah!’ Needless to say, I am, *baruch Hashem*, in good health 45 years later.”

A unique period in Rabbi Lipskar’s life was when the Rebbe allowed him to do something extraordinary.

“A friend of Mel Landow once came to my office and asked me a surprising question. What was something that I deeply wanted to do, but didn’t have the opportunity to accomplish, he asked. He was ready to sponsor it.

“I was stunned by the question but when I began to think of it, I realized that I wanted to take a year off to learn Chassidus on a deeper level. I had been interacting with people for over 10 years, and I was dealing with many difficult questions that I felt I didn’t have the proper answers to. It was also a difficult period in my shlichus in the school, and I felt that a year off would be beneficial.

“To my surprise, the Rebbe approved of the idea, calling it a ‘temporary leave of absence for one year.’

“The benefactor sponsored the entire year, including travel expenses to every single farbrengen of the Rebbe. That year, 5740\*-5741\*, the Rebbe farbrenged for many hours almost every single Shabbos!

“I also traveled to many Jewish leaders of other communities to better understand their movements, and I had the opportunity to make many connections which came to good use years later.

“Throughout the year, I wrote to the Rebbe often, and the Rebbe would answer my questions almost immediately. On many occasions, the Rebbe answered them in the course of the *sichos*.

“At the close of that year, I needed to make a decision about our future, and the Rebbe said:

‘בשטח החינוך והקשור לזה, כמענתי מאז, ללמד וללמד

(The Rebbe added *nekudos lilmod ulelamed*, to those words)

להתנהג על פיהם, ואין צריך כלל וכלל לקרות בספרי חיצוניים, ובלב בטוח יכול לסמוך על גדולי ישראל האמתיים...’

In the field of education, as I told you some time ago [meaning, when we originally went on shlichus] to learn and to teach, and to live according to [those teachings]. There is no need at all to study secular books, and with a complete assurance you can rely on the true *gedolei Yisroel*. The next year, we started The Shul.

## Caring for Individuals

Another lesson that Rabbi Lipskar shared with us was about the importance of each individual.

“Every time we would have *yechidus*, I would write a report wrapping up all our activities of the entire year.

“One year, the Rebbe read through the entire 5-6 pages of the report, checking off the important points with a pencil, and then he asked, ‘What’s with the mother of the girl?’

“At first I was puzzled, and didn’t understand the Rebbe’s intentions. But then it hit me.

“On an earlier occasion, we had mentioned a girl whose mother had gone off to India with a boyfriend. The Rebbe asked us to ensure that she had received a proper Jewish divorce. We had tried to locate her, but were unsuccessful.

“I started to shake. I realized that the Rebbe had asked me to do

something and I hadn’t delivered. I couldn’t wait to get out of the room and I couldn’t focus on what the Rebbe said afterwards, although my wife said he gave us beautiful *brachos*.

“I ran out of the room and started working for 24 hours, until I located the husband, arranged for a *get*, and then I reported it to the Rebbe.

“It taught me that although you may be involved in great and important endeavors, you must never forget the individual. The Rebbe didn’t forget them.

“This had an impact on a story several years later.

“There was a young woman from Beis Rivkah who ended up in Miami in a very bad situation. It so happened that we were in New York at the time, and at Sunday Dollars, the Rebbe gave a dollar to my wife and me and said, ‘*Far gantz Florida*—for the entire Florida.’

“We searched for the girl upon our return, and we found her on the street late at night in a bad neighborhood. She wasn’t interested in what we had to say, until my wife threatened her, ‘If you don’t start behaving, we will throw you out of the neighborhood.’

“Who made you the boss?”

“The Rebbe just made us in charge of the entire Florida,’ my wife said.

“The girl took it seriously; when we mentioned the Rebbe she realized that she was dealing with something of a different nature, and over time she shaped up.

“It was amazing to see how one word of the Rebbe could make a huge difference in someone’s life.” **T**

1. 19 Kislev 5750. <https://www.chabad.org/471235>

2. [chabad.org/239247](https://www.chabad.org/239247)

3. Reb Eliyahu was a member of *mazkirus* in the early years, originally hired as the Rebbe’s accountant. Not a Lubavitcher Chossid, he was a *lamdan*, and he would often sign letters in the Rebbe’s name.

4. See *Derher*, Cheshvan 5780.