REB ZUSHE PULLS THE PILOT INTO THE FESTIVITIES, 16 ELUL 5737* לעילוי נשמת מרת **לאה** בת הרה"ח ר' **אליהו נחום** ע"ה נלב"ע **כ"ה אלול ה'תשע"ג** ת'נ'צ'ב'ה' נדפס ע"י משפחתה שיחיו

CAS

"My Personal Guests"

The story of the "Orchim"– the Chassidim who travel from far and near to spend Tishrei with the Rebbe

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 2045

תשרי ביים רבי'ן!

Tishrei by the Rebbe! Words that fill a Chossid's heart with joy and longing. Throughout the generations, the peak of a Chossid's year was being by his Rebbe for Tishrei. No effort was spared from making this trip possible. It meant days or weeks of travel, sometimes at enormous cost.

During the month of Tishrei, the Rabbeim would spend many extra hours with the Chassidim, attending many *tefillos*, saying additional *maamarim* and many other opportunities. There were many special *giluyim* during this month, intensifying its significance.

In 5708*, the Rebbe expressed the incredible importance of spending Tishrei with the Rebbe, in a letter addressed to a Chossid whom the Rebbe had hoped would have come to spend Tishrei with the Frierdiker Rebbe but had not:

Like every year, you should have come here to spend Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, and we would have seen each other and had the opportunity to converse.

It seems that because of various reasons you were held up and weren't able to make the journey.

It is a shame, in light of the words of Chazal, "One is obligated to visit his Rebbe during the regel..." The most opportune time for this is during the shalosh regalim just as it was in the times of the Beis Hamikdash.¹

What took place in the month of Tishrei served as a source of rejuvenation, refreshing the *chayus* of Chassidim for the rest of the year.

This was especially true in *dor hashvi'i*. Remarkable *gilyuim* filled the days from Shabbos Selichos through Shabbos Bereishis. Handing the Rebbe a *pan*, hearing the Rebbe's *tekios*, experiencing Napoleon's March and *hakafos*, are just a few examples of



CHASSIDIM DANCE BEFORE EMBARKING ON THE CHARTERED FLIGHT TO NEW YORK, ELUL 5721*

moments that highlighted Tishrei with the Rebbe.

Often, even a regular day in Tishrei was transformed through the Rebbe's liveliness and enthusiasm. Just being in the Rebbe's *daled amos* any day of the month was something special.

In the early years there was a slow trickle of guests from different parts of the globe who would make the trip to New York to spend either parts of or the entire Tishrei with the Rebbe. Due to the prohibitive costs of flights and the sheer length of time and difficulty of traveling by ship, guests for Tishrei were quite few in those early years.

In the summer of 5716*, in the aftermath of the terrible massacre in Kfar Chabad, the Rebbe sent a group of 12 shluchim for a 10-day trip to Eretz Yisroel to elevate the spirits of *anash.*²

Six weeks after their return, during the farbrengen of Shabbos Nitzavim-Vayelech the Rebbe referred to the shlichus and its success.

"In kedusha *everything must 'bear fruits...' With regard to the shlichus*

of the shluchim who traveled to Eretz Yisroel [earlier this summer]—aside for the importance of their actual mission we see that there were side benefits as well. They motivated many more guests from Eretz Yisroel to come here [for Tishrei]. Therefore, the shluchim and the orchim should say l'chaim and sing a niggun from Eretz Yisroel Yisroel ?.

Clearly the floodgates burst open during Tishrei 5721* when a group of 100 guests arrived in 770 with the first chartered flight of Chassidim from Eretz Yisroel. It was an historic trip³ that transformed the entire attitude of *adas haChassidim* worldwide about the practicality of making such a trip and even making it routinely. From then on the number of *orchim* in 770 for Tishrei swelled exponentially.

Typically *orchim* would start arriving around Chai Elul and as the years progressed the Rebbe indicated that those who were able should remain until Zayin Cheshvan.⁴

Kabbalas Ponim

On the night of Erev Rosh Hashanah 5723* (29 Elul 5722) the Rebbe held a surprise farbrengen as a *kabbalas ponim* for the *orchim* who had come for Tishrei.

During the farbrengen the Rebbe said a *maamar kein sicha* with the *dibbur hamaschil* "הכנסת אורחים Hosting guests is greater than greeting the face of the *Shechina*".⁶ From then on every year, one of the farbrengens during Elul was considered a *kabbalas panim* for the *orchim*. In addition, the Rebbe instructed that the annual Tzach convention that took place on Sukkos should serve as a *kabbalas panim* for the *orchim*, and that guests from around the world should speak and share the various *peulos* being done in their respective locations.

Increased Shiurim in Torah

During the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim 5721* the Rebbe spoke of the importance for the guests who arrived from overseas and especially Eretz Yisroel to add in their *shiurim* in Torah during the duration of their stay. It was the first time Reb Zushe Wilmovsky, known as "Reb Zushe Partisan," was present at the Rebbe's farbrengen, and the Rebbe singled him out:

"There is Yid here called Zushe Wilmovsky, and he is a partisan.⁷ A



FARBRENGEN EREV ROSH HASHANAH 5723*

partisan does not make calculations about big or small things, and is completely focused on accomplishing the needs of the kingdom. Since there are 20 or 21 things left to accomplish before the arrival of Moshiach, we need to work in a partisan fashion. It's not very orderly, but it's in accordance with the kavana."

With this the Rebbe suggested to Reb Zushe that he become responsible to arrange the *shiurim*. He immediately agreed and when the Rebbe asked him if he needed assistants he declined the help.

The Rebbe then handed him his becher and Reb Zushe said *l'chaim* and drank the wine from the Rebbe's becher and returned it. The Rebbe then handed him the plate of cake to distribute to the participants in the shiurim, but several of the Chassidim standing nearby swiftly grabbed the contents of the plate and Reb Zushe forlornly gazed at the Rebbe unsure of how to proceed. The Rebbe looked to the right and to the left and immediately all the pieces of cake were returned to the plate in Reb Zushe's hands. As he returned to his place the Rebbe said to him, "Walk straight, I am protecting you."

Following the farbrengen Reb Zushe stood up on a bench and announced, "Silence! All the guests from Eretz Yisroel and from elsewhere should come tomorrow to the official *shiur* in Chassidus from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and for the *shiur nigleh* in Shulchan Aruch at 10:30 a.m. The locals should come to the *shiur* in *nigleh* from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. to learn Shulchan Aruch. With regard



REB ZUSHE TAKES ATTENDANCE, ASERES YEMEI TESHUVA 5746*

Special Dollars

Throughout the years the Rebbe instructed those who wanted to travel to 770 for Tishrei that they should do so only if they would not incur financial debt as a result. There were some exceptions however.

As the first charter to the Rebbe for Tishrei 5721* was being organized, Reb Avrohom Hersh Cohen of Yerushalayim very much wanted to join, however he simply did not have the money. Nevertheless he decided to participate on the historic journey, but his wife was adamantly against the idea of him borrowing more money since he was already drowning in debt. She wrote a letter to the Rebbe explaining her position but to her surprise the Rebbe responded that she should not worry and that Reb Avrohom Hersh's trip would bring blessing to the family.

When Reb Avrohom Hersh was in *yechidus* the Rebbe said to him that since he delivers many Tanya *shiurim* with *mesiras nefesh*, he would like to participate in the costs of his trip. The Rebbe handed him a \$100 bill and said, "I don't want you to keep it as a *segulah*. I want you to use it to cover the costs of the trip."

The next day, the Rebbe's secretary Reb Moshe Leib Rodshtein met Reb Avrohom Hersh and asked him about his *yechidus*. He shared with him the story of the \$100 bill and confided that he was unsure of how to proceed.

After a few moments of thought Reb Moshe Leib said, "I suggest you go to the bank and change the \$100 bill for one hundred single dollar bills and sell each dollar for \$10."

Together they went across the street to the bank and procured the 100 single dollar bills and when they returned to 770 Reb Moshe Leib pulled out a stamp he had prepared with the words: דולר לברכה מכ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א - מרחשון (A dollar of blessing from the Rebbe Shlita - Marcheshvan 5721*).

Reb Avrohom Hersh asked Reb Moshe Leib how he has the audacity to do such a thing and he responded, "If the Rebbe wants this \$100 bill to cover the costs of your trip, surely this is what the Rebbe had in mind."

Needless to say, the sale of the special dollars covered the costs of the trip to the Rebbe.



FEEDING THE ORCHIM AT THE FARBAND/UFARATZTA, TISHREI 5744*

to Chassidus they should speak to the *mashpi'im*. Everyone should participate!"

In his inimitable manner Reb Zushe would not only arrange the *shiurim* but would actively recruit and encourage the *orchim* to participate. Every year, from the moment he landed in New York he set about arranging *shiurim* for every demographic of the diverse population of *orchim* that came for Tishrei. There were *shiurim* in Hebrew and in Yiddish and on multiple levels, for women, younger girls, *bochurim, mekuravim* and children.

Reb Zushe would take attendance of all the *shiurim* and would submit a *duch* to the Rebbe every single day.

Every year the Rebbe would speak of the importance of these *shiurim* and demand that although the guests were certainly exhausted from their travels, their time in 770 should be spent learning even more and deeper than when they are home. Especially with regard to the guests from Eretz Yisroel the Rebbe often pointed out that the only "*heter*" they have for leaving Eretz Yisroel was in order to increase in *limud haTorah*.

In addition to increasing their own *limud haTorah*, the Rebbe instructed that during Chol Hamoed Sukkos when groups of Chassidim would travel to many other cities to farbreng with Yidden in honor of *simchas beis hashoevah*, every group should take with them a guest from overseas so that they can have an impact on the local Yidden. (As halacha dictates, seeing a "new" face increases one's joy.⁸)

Even Greater than Gvraham Gvinu

Over the years, the local Crown Heights families hosted the many Tishrei *orchim* and Tzach was responsible for making many of the arrangements. They would distribute vouchers for meals at a restaurant called Ess and Bentch and for the most part the Chassidim who spent Tishrei by the Rebbe were taken care of.

Tishrei 5731* saw an even greater influx of *orchim* than ever before. In addition to the ever growing amounts of Chassidim who made the trip each year to spend Yom Tov with the Rebbe, several months earlier a large contingent of Yidden had miraculously emigrated from the Soviet Union and the Rebbe invited them all to spend Tishrei in 770 and paid for their flights.

Whereas the food vouchers distributed by Tzach for meals at Ess and Bentch had sufficed in earlier years, the Crown Heights community was simply not able to handle the needs of the overflowing crowd of guests that year.

It was during Aseres Yemei Teshuva that year when Reb Moshe Yeruslavsky, a Chossid from Tel Aviv who had been coming to the Rebbe for Tishrei for several years already, decided to take action. He approached

The Rebbe's horaos regarding the Shiurim

- ** There should be *shiurim* in nigleh and Chassidus.
- * The shiurim should be held in the morning and the evening.
- Shiurim should be arranged every day, as well as Shabbos and Yom Tov.
- ** Orchim should be the maggidei shiurim.
- * There should be shiurim for women as well.
- It would be proper to give tzedakah before every shiur.

Tzach with an offer: Grant me the use of the large facility known as "Farband/Ufaratzta" (the building on the corner of Kingston Ave. and Union St.) and I will take care of all the rest.

Literally overnight, Reb Moshe purchased all the utensils necessary to set up a commercial kitchen capable of preparing thousands of meals a day. He hired a staff and ensured that they had all the ingredients needed to get the job done. Hundreds of guests started streaming to the new *hachnasas orchim* location at all times of the day and all their culinary needs were taken care of.

Reb Moshe took a hands-on approach to this new project and he personally shopped for the food and anything else needed to ensure the operation ran at full capacity. He could be seen setting up the tables and serving the food all while fundraising the entire budget on his own. The next year he started to arrange lodging for the guests and even rented apartments and basements throughout Crown Heights so that every guest would have a bed or a mattress to sleep on during the time he or she was by the Rebbe. This mammoth operation came to be



THE REBBE GIVES THE LEFTOVER CAKE TO REB MOSHE FOR THE ORCHIM, 4 CHESHVAN 5737

known simply as "אש"ל" reminiscent of the *eishel* established by Avraham Avinu that provided food, drink and lodging for all.

There were several wealthy Chassidim who donated generously to the cause every year and the entire Crown Heights community hosted guests as always, but Reb Moshe assumed sole responsibility for providing the *orchim* their day-to-day needs for the duration of their stay over Tishrei.

In an exclusive interview with A Chassidisher Derher, Rabbi Yitzchok Yehuda Yeruslavsky, Reb Moshe's son, shared with us the following story of those early days of Eishel.

"My father was so preoccupied with his newly assumed responsibilities that he did not even have a chance to notify the Rebbe of what he was doing, but Reb Avrohom Parshan of Toronto walked into "Farband/ Ufaratzta" on one of those early days and was amazed at what he saw. That night he was in *yechidus* and instead of discussing his own private issues he excitedly reported to the Rebbe about the amazing *hachnasas* orchim operation my father had just engineered. Hearing this the Rebbe said, 'Finally, some good news, baruch Hashem! Every day Yidden come in here with 'sacks' of problems and requests and now I hear a besura tova—the type of news I'm waiting to hear for 21 years already...'

"Reb Avrohom Parshan was so overwhelmed by the magnitude of the *hachnasas orchim* that he commented to the Rebbe that my father is like Avraham Avinu. The Rebbe corrected him. '*Reb Moshe is greater than Avraham Avinu. Avraham Avinu hosted Arabs in his tent, Reb Moshe is feeding Yidden. Avraham Avinu hosted people that came to his home and Reb Moshe came from overseas to host people far away from his home.*'

"At the end of Tishrei when my parents were in yechidus the Rebbe opened his desk drawer and said, 'Nu, Reb Moshe. How much is your deficit?" My father answered simply, 'Rebbe, there is no deficit, baruch Hashem.' This would happen every year. The Rebbe offered to cover the deficit and my father would assure the Rebbe that it was all taken care of. "In 5748* there was a very large amount of guests and the Rebbe sent a check with a huge sum of money to my father to assist in the costs of Eishel."

While Reb Moshe did not charge the beneficiaries of the services he provided, he expected them to commit to participating in the daily *shiurim* arranged for the *orchim* per the Rebbe's request, under the supervision of Reb Zushe Wilmovsky as described above.

Thereafter, Reb Moshe and his wife were the faces of Tishrei *hachnasas orchim* in Crown Heights. From Chai Elul until Zayin Cheshvan they worked around the clock to ensure that every single one of the Rebbe's guests felt comfortable and all their physical needs were taken care of.

G Royal Visit

Two years after its founding, on Friday evening, Leil Shabbos Parshas Haazinu 5733* the Rebbe visited the Eishel *seudas Shabbos* at the Ufaratzta hall. When the Rebbe reached the top of the staircase he asked for Reb Moshe and since the crush of the crowd was so great Reb Moshe had difficulty reaching the Rebbe. The Rebbe said, "If he can not come to me, I will go to him." Finally Reb Moshe arrived and the Rebbe said to him:

שנה שמחה דתענוג ועונג, יישר כוח גדול ולשנה הבאה בירושלים.

May you have a joyful year full of delight [the Rebbe was referring to the fact that Rosh Hashanah had occurred on Shabbos, which is a day of שונג – delight]. Many thanks, and by next year may we be in Yerushalayim.

Then the Rebbe turned to the orchim and bentched them all: שתהי' שבת שמחה, ושכל השנה תהי' באופן של שבת. גמר חתימה טובה, ושנה של מנוחה שמחה ועונג.

May this Shabbos be joyful, and may the entire year be in the tone of "Shabbos." *Gmar chasima tova*, and may we have a peaceful, joyful, and delightful year [in the spirit of Rosh Hashanah occurring on Shabbos].

That night the Rebbe walked home from 770 specifically on Kingston Avenue instead of Brooklyn Avenue in order to pass by the hall where the *seudas Shabbos* of the *orchim* was being held. Upon hearing the singing of the *orchim*, he slowed down, visibly pleased with the sound of their singing.

During Tishrei 5735* the Rebbe visited the hall as well. After inspecting all the tables, the Rebbe walked into the room where the ladies were having *seudas Shabbos* and asked why there were fewer candles than women. Rabbi Binyomin Klein noted that most of the women had lit Shabbos candles at their lodgings. The Rebbe *bentched* the assembled *orchim* and after descending the steps to the street said to Reb Moshe:



DISTRIBUTING FOOD TO THE ORCHIM OUTSIDE THE LARGE SUKKAH, CHOL HAMOED SUKKOS 5745*

דער אויבערשטער גיט אייך אפ א ישר כוח

און איר זאלט זוכה זיין לקבל פני שכינה. Hashem gives you a yasher koach and you should merit to greet the Shechina.

Leil Shabbos, Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5738* the Rebbe entered the large sukkah adjacent to 770 which was set up for *seudas Shabbos* for the *orchim*, and asked Reb Moshe if there was food on the tables and benches for everyone to sit on. The many *orchim* who were standing on the benches to catch a glimpse of the Rebbe descended from the benches so the Rebbe could see them. The Rebbe walked through the entire sukkah and then said a special *bracha* to all the *orchim*.

Thus began a yearly tradition that the Rebbe would visit the large sukkah of the *orchim* every year before one of the *seudos* and eventually it became the *seuda* of the first night of Yom Tov. After being escorted by Reb Moshe through the entire sukkah, the Rebbe delivered a special *bracha*. Over the years this *bracha* evolved into longer *sichos* always highlighting the greatness of *hachnasas orchim, ahavas Yisroel* and often connected to the Ushpizin of that night, Avraham Avinu and the Baal Shem Tov.

The Rebbe utilized other opportunities to express his appreciation for the guests who came for Tishrei. One year the Rebbe gave money to the *gabbai* of 770 Reb Yochanan Gordon as payment for the *aliyos* of the *orchim*. Every year at *hakafos* the Rebbe ensured that the *orchim* were honored with reciting *pesukim* of the *Atah Haraisa* and holding the Torah.

Throughout the month, at the end of every farbrengen the Rebbe would give all the leftover wine in his *becher*, water in the bottle, and plate of *challos* or cake from the farbrengen to Reb Moshe to be distributed to the *orchim*. Before Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe would send him several pomegranates and Reb Moshe would give each guest a few seeds from the Rebbe's pomegranates.

G Major Yasher Koach

In a show of unique appreciation for the vital work of Eishel on behalf of the *orchim*, each year the Rebbe publicly praised Reb Moshe for undertaking this project and showered

The Delayed Flight

It was 28 Elul 5739* and a group a Chassidim were on a flight bound for New York when they encountered some major delays. They notified the Rebbe and asked for a *bracha* that they would arrive in New York in time for Yom Tov.

That night at the farbrengen for Erev Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe spoke of the episode.

"There are Yidden who are flying here [for Yom Tov] but they got a 'pantcher' (Israeli slang for a flat tire) and were delayed.

"If not for this delay they would have participated in this farbrengen together with all the Yidden gathered here in the beis haknesses and beis hamedrash the [Frierdiker] Rebbe learned and davened in for the final 10 years of his life.

"We will therefore leave some wine and mezonos for them, and those who are responsible for the hachnasas orchim will certainly welcome them (despite the late hour due to their delay) and continue the farbrengen together with them."¹² him and his family with many *brachos*. For example:

- "Now is the appropriate time to express a true yasher koach and to share how it causes a great nachas ruach to me—to those who work hard to remove the excuse of אם אין קמח אין העורה, that the guests should be taken care of by having all their physical needs arranged for them in a pleasant and dignified manner... fortunate are all those who assist them in this important endeavor.⁹"
- "There is a Yid who comes every year together with his wife, and with mesiras nefesh they ensure that all the guests should have all their needs provided for them—food, drink and lodging. Certainly they are fortunate in this world and in the next world, together with their entire family and all their descendants.¹⁰"

Perhaps the most telling and interesting reference to the importance of Reb Moshe's work with Eishel came during the Shabbos farbrengen of Shushan Purim 5741*. The Rebbe discussed the fact that it's important to arrange that in 770 there should not only be enough *sefarim* for everyone to learn Chassidus but it is also necessary to arrange proper hospitality.

"When a Yid comes into 770 he should be able to drink some hot water or tea in a proper cup and in a proper setting... There is no need to wait for Harav Yeruslavsky of Tel Aviv to come here and to work hard to arrange drinks and refreshments... the locals should learn from him.¹¹"

קשה עלי פרידתכם

The highlight of a Chossid's Tishrei was the opportunity to have a private *yechidus* with the Rebbe. In the early years the *orchim* had the opportunity



YECHIDUS KLOLIS WITH THE ORCHIM, 26 TISHREI 5746*

to go into *yechidus* twice, once close to their arrival and the second time before their departure. With time, only one *yechidus* became possible.

After the events of Shemini Atzeres 5738*, even though *yechidus* throughout the year had basically stopped, *orchim* were still able to have a short *yechidus* after Tishrei.

During Tishrei 5740* there were several *orchim* who realized that the current system was too overwhelming and they offered to have *yechidus* together as a group. The Rebbe was pleased with this arrangement and in 5742* the *orchim* no longer had personal *yechidus* and the concept of *yechidus klolis* began.¹³

The Rebbe would address the gathered *orchim* with a *sicha* often focused on the idea that after spending an entire month of Tishrei together, the fact that everyone is returning to their respective places is not a separation. Each person has his unique shlichus and the powerful memories of the time spent together will provide the necessary inspiration each one needs to fulfill his respective shlichus. The Rebbe would often invoke the famous analogy of Chazal for Shemini Atzeres of the king who says to his children after a long festival, קשה קשה, פרידתכם your departure is very painful for me.

In the earlier years the Rebbe would stand at the door of 770 to see off large groups of *orchim* as they departed for the airport.

Rabbi Tuvia Blau merited to be by the Rebbe for Tishrei 5723* and described the feeling of the final day of his trip:

"During the last Mincha all the guests tried to 'ingest' as much as they could of the Rebbe. The emotions are running high... Tonight we will be departing and will not be able to see or hear the Rebbe for a while (hopefully a very short while). All we will have is our memories.

"All the *orchim* brought their luggage with them to 770 before Maariv because the buses to the airport were scheduled to depart immediately afterwards. As Maariv concluded a lively *chassidisher* dance broke out with all the *orchim* and local Chassdim dancing together in front of 770. Suddenly the entire crowd noticed that the Rebbe was standing in front of the main entranceway and the emotions climaxed.

"As we were singing אכי בשמחה תצאו, we were constantly looking at the Rebbe and as the time came we walked backwards onto the buses and saw the Rebbe's gaze accompanying us the entire time we were still in sight." **①**

- 5. Toras Menachem vol. 34, p. 311.
- 6. Ibid. page 308.

7. Reb Zushe survived the Holocaust hiding in the forests with Jewish partisans.

- 8. Kesubos 7b.
- 9. 5737
- 10. 5740
- 11. 5741
- 12. Sichos Kodesh 5739 vol. 3 page 752.
- 13. See Moments, Derher Shevat 5778.

^{1.} Igros Kodesh vol. 2, p. 254.

^{2.} Read all about this historic shlichus in *Transforming Tragedy*, Derher Sivan 5774.

^{3.} Read all about this historic trip in Derher #23 - Elul 5774 - Charter to the Rebbe 5721.

^{4.} Shabbos Parshas Lech L'cha 5748.



