

# *A Chassidisher* **Derher**

א חסידישער דערהער

חינוך על טהרת הקודש

## PURITY OF THE MIND

*Educating children only with Torah*

**From Harvard to 770**

PROFESSOR YITZCHOK BLOCK

**"My Personal Guests"**

THE STORY OF THE "ORCHIM"—THE CHASSIDIM  
WHO TRAVEL FROM FAR AND NEAR TO SPEND  
THE MONTH OF TISHREI WITH THE REBBE



**ELUL 5780**  
ISSUE 97 (174)  
DECEMBER 2020

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A Chassidisher Derher (ISSN 26411059) (USPS 21880) is published monthly by A Chassidisher Derher Inc, 784 Eastern Pkwy, Brooklyn, NY 11213. Subscription price \$71 a year. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to A Chassidisher Derher, 784 Eastern Pkwy, Brooklyn, NY 11213.

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This magazine has been made possible

לזכות  
הרה"ת ר' שלום וזוגתו מרת שרה  
וילדיהם ישראל, ריסא, חי' מושקא,  
אמונה מלכה, יעקב יהודה, ולאה שיחיו  
אייזיקוביץ

## Derher **Editorial**

The month of Elul is referred to as “*chodesh hacheshbon*”—the month of accounting. It is the time that we’re expected to take stock of our *avodas Hashem* over the past year and revisit those areas that need to be fixed or improved. It is certainly an appropriate time to think about the most important shlichus that the Rebbe gives each and every member of our generation: to prepare the world for the coming of Moshiach, and to do all we can to bring the *geula*.

Reflecting upon this subject, it is fascinating that unlike most of the other *mitzvot* or initiatives that the Rebbe asks Chassidim to undertake, when it comes to bringing the *geula* the Rebbe asked for a much deeper commitment.

It is not enough just to “do the do,” whatever it takes to bring Moshiach. The Rebbe screamed in anguish that we don’t seem to truly *want* Moshiach *mit an emmes*. The Rebbe wants us to cry out “*Ad mosai*” with sincerity; truly feeling the bitter hardship of the *galus* and longing for the *geula*. As the Rebbe famously said on 28 Nissan 5751, if you would scream “*Ad mosai*” with sincerity (and not just because you were told to do so), there is no doubt that Moshiach would have long come already.

What is more, moments after the *sicha*, the Rebbe expressed to Reb Zalman Gurary that “לא נגע ולא פגע”—his words did not have any effect whatsoever.

Training ourselves to see the world through the Rebbe’s vision and to long for the *geula* with sincerity is a work in progress. One might think: Isn’t this a bit disheartening? If the Chassidim didn’t heed the Rebbe’s heartfelt words even moments after they were said in great anguish, how can we even attempt to get it right today, all these years later?

Our answer might come by gaining some added perspective on the subject, perusing a *sicha* the Rebbe said just a few days earlier, on 26 Nissan.

Addressing the *yeichidus-klolis* with the *orchim*, the Rebbe relished in all the open wonders and miracles that had taken place in the recent past (the events of the Gulf War), to the point that everyone recognizes the need to dance in great joy! The Rebbe was pointing to all these world events as the greatest miracles of our time and expected that Yidden should recognize the pattern of *geula* in the air. The Rebbe wanted people to be so excited about it, to the extent that their feet are lifted off the ground in joy!

Then, two days later, the Rebbe expressed his disappointment that it seemed the message is not being internalized. True, people are davening for Moshiach and screaming “*Ad mosai*,” but that is only because they’ve been told to do so. Not because they really want it.

Why?

Why weren't people feeling a sense of true longing to the *geula* with the heartfelt sincerity that the Rebbe expected?

Perhaps it is because when the Rebbe was seen physically, speaking clearly to the Chassidim every Shabbos and delivering the *dvar Hashem* in such a clear and revealed way, it was hard for Chasidim to feel a lack. The "*churban*" of the *galus* was not felt. *Elokus* was in the open. So when it came time to scream "*Ad mosai*," it was only because the Rebbe wanted it.

[Similar sentiment is said of the Chassidim of the Mitteler Rebbe: They did not feel the lack of *geula* in their lives, due to the immense *giluy Elokus* they had with the Mitteler Rebbe's Chassidus. It's often cited in maamorim that for great *tzaddikim* like Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his colleagues, there was no *churban* at all. Hence it is logical to say that in the presence of a Rebbe, *galus* is not a factor.]

But as is plain to see, the Rebbe does not approve of this approach at all.

The Rebbe explains in the *maamar V'ata Tetzaveh* that as long as there is even one corner of the world where *Elokus* is not felt, a person should be shaken to the core. Because a true revelation of *Elokus* would be felt everywhere. The Rebbe wanted that Chassidim should feel the travesty of the *Shechina* being in *galus* and demand an end to the *galus*. As long as there is one corner of the world where the truth of Hashem's essence is not apparent and people live their lives not the way Hashem wants, the *galus* is still raging. The Rebbe wants us to be pained by this, not because the Rebbe says so, but because we really feel it.

[The Rebbe once explained that when doing the *mitzvot* and spreading the *maayanot* of Chassidus, a Chassid needs to be motivated by a real care for the cause and actively seek out the best for his fellow Jew. If you're only doing it because "the Rebbe said so," but your heart and soul are not in it, the extent of your influence on the other will be compromised. – *Shabbos Parshas Shelach* 5742.]

The Rebbe needs us to be in it all the way.

And this leads us to our own situation in this bitter *galus*: As Chassidim, we often feel the urgency of bringing the *geula* to be able to see the Rebbe again and be in his holy presence physically.

However, considering the scores of *sichos* the Rebbe spoke about the painful cry of "*Ad mosai*," this is obviously not enough.

The Rebbe says that in order for us to bring the *geula*, we need to work on take ourselves and our own wants completely out of the picture; total *bittul*, and retrain ourselves to long for a "*geula'dike*" world, where the whole of humanity recognizes *Elokus*. Not just as dedicated Chassidim who love the Rebbe unconditionally and yearn for the time when we'll be reunited with the Rebbe again. The Alter Rebbe exclaimed that Chabad is not like a political party, suitable for only one group of people. Chabad is to spread to each and every single *Yid* around the world! As the Baal Shem Tov was famously told by Moshiach—*לכשיפוצו מעיינותיך חוצה*—

We all care deeply about the mission the Rebbe entrusted us with. Obviously then, we need to go beyond what *we* want as Chassidim and truly care for a Moshiach world, where *Elokus* is finally revealed for all.

By learning more and more Chassidus, especially the Rebbe's Torah, and most importantly in the subject of *geula* (as the Rebbe instructed), we will indeed succeed at internalizing the Rebbe's outlook for the world, heeding the Rebbe's call to truly feel and want Moshiach.

And then, as the Rebbe says, Moshiach will already long be here.

בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה לשנה טובה ומתוקה.

**A Chassidisher Derher**

כ"ף מנחם אב ה'תש"פ

שבעים שנה לנשיאות כ"ק אדמו"ר

# POVERTY IS A THING?

On the possuk “אשרי משכיל אל דל”—Fortunate is he who gives wisely to the poor,” the Zohar states:

*How great is the reward of the poor before Hashem!*

“כי שומע אל אביונים ה”—For Hashem hearkens to the needy.” Does Hashem only listen to the needy? What about everyone else?

Rabbi Shimon answered: Because the poor are closer to the King, as it says, “לב נשבר ונדכה אלהים לא תבזה”—Hashem, You will not despise a broken and crushed heart.” And who is more broken-hearted than a poor man.

The Zohar implies that the mere destitution makes a person deserving of a reward.

But why? If the suffering is not accompanied by any other accomplishments, why should one be rewarded?

Granted, when a person works harder to reach his accomplishments, it is understandable that he is more deserving of a reward. After all, he made a choice, worked hard, and put in the extra effort.

But if someone merely lived a miserable life, not even necessarily by his own choices, he may deserve our pity, but a reward just seems out of place!

## TAKE ONE FOR THE TEAM

The Rebbe answers this question with a beautiful explanation of the Tzemach Tzedek regarding Kohanim.

The Torah says that a Kohen with a *mum* is not allowed to serve in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Even though the *mum* is no fault of his own, it still disqualifies him.

Why would Hashem create a Kohen in such a way, that he can't even fulfil his life's main purpose?

The Tzemach Tzedek explains this with a *mashal*:

When a general goes to war against an enemy, he wants to ensure that he can fight on his own terms, so he uses a ploy: He places the weakest and most inadequate soldiers on the perimeter. This way, the enemy begins to attack these weak soldiers while being drawn away from their starting point. The weaker soldiers take a heavy hit, all the while retreating and pulling the enemy



A LOOK AT THE TORAH OF  
HARAV LEVI YITZCHOK  
THROUGH THE REBBE'S SICHOS



further away from their “comfort zone.” Once the enemy is far enough inside the field, the general can launch his attack and completely destroy the enemy.

In our instance:

Sometimes Hashem allows the *klipos* to draw life from *kedusha*, with the goal that eventually when the stolen *kedusha*-life is returned to its place, it will bring along with it the *chayus* of the *klipos* themselves as well, thereby totally annihilating the forces of evil.

When a Kohen is born as a *baal-mum*, it is because at that precise moment, Hashem is allowing the enemy, the *klipa*, to get in a few “hits” on the *kedusha*.

[Hashem does not let the *klipa* damage the soul of the Kohen; only the outer layer, the body, which is why even with the physical blemish he still remains a Kohen and is even allowed to eat from the *korbanos*.]

By being born at this “unlucky” time, this Kohen is essentially “taking a hit” for Hashem so-to-speak, and is therefore worthy of reward, even though he did not choose it.

### TIME FOR THE REWARD

We can now understand why the suffering of the poor is actually a great accomplishment, albeit one they did not choose. Hence the Zohar’s statement, “How great is the reward of the poor before Hashem.”

In a later portion, in Parshas Ki Tetzei, the Zohar states that if there comes a generation in which Hashem wants to bring Moshiach but the Jews are unworthy, Hashem will make them worthy. How? He will cause them anguish and then in turn will reward them with the *geula*. As the Mishna in Avos says, “לפום צערא אגרא—According to the pain is the reward.” This is as if pain itself is the quickest way to earn a reward.

But is this comforting? Do we really want to go through enough suffering to earn Moshiach with pain?

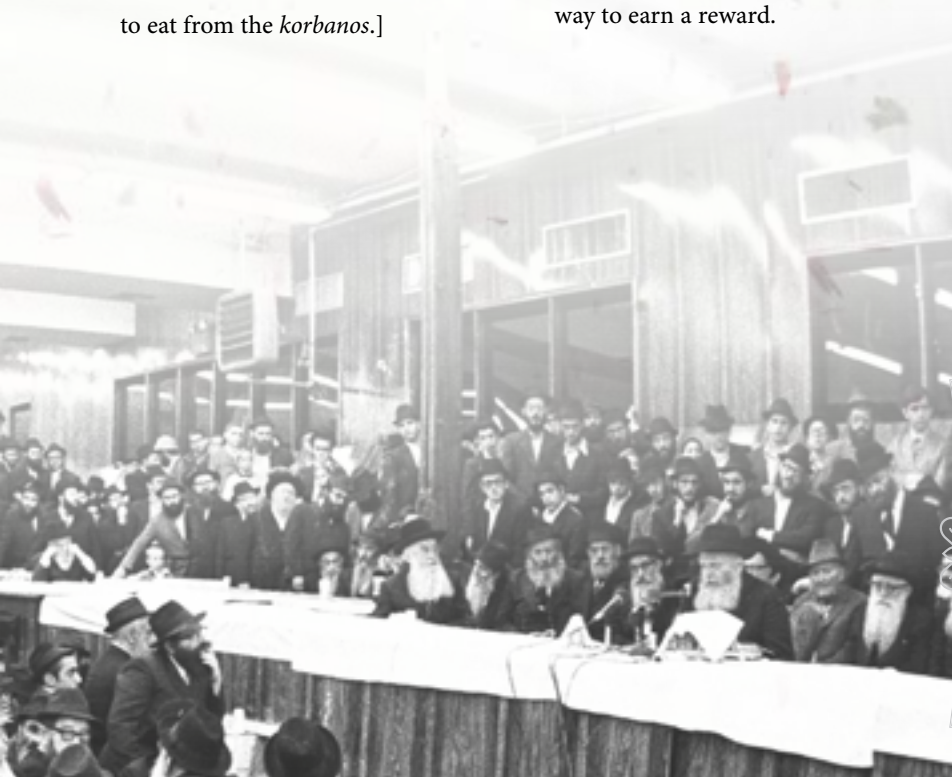
The Rebbe says “No!”

In fact we can be living well, with great abundance and all the blessings of health and wealth, and show Hashem our appreciation by being happy with our good lot.

As for the pain, it is enough that we are anguished by the fact that the *Shechina* is in *galus* in a society which confuses light and dark. We are anguished just knowing of the pain that the *Shechina* endures every time a Yid does something inappropriate.

Furthermore: Just knowing the pain of the *Shechina* in our mind alone, and even periodically, should already be sufficient for us to be worthy of “reward of the poor”—the גאולה האמיתית והשלמה. **1**

(Adapted from *Motzei Shabbos*  
Parshas Beshalach 5739)



לזכות  
החתן הרה"ת ר' צבי הירש שיחי' אלפרוביץ  
והכלה המהוללה מרת אסתר הדסה תחלי'  
שפאלטר  
לרגל נישואיהם בשעתומ"צ י"ד אלול ה'תש"פ  
נדפס ע"י הוריהם  
הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק וזוגתו מרת חנה שרה  
ומשפחתם שיחי' אלפרוביץ  
הרה"ת ר' ישראל בנימין וזוגתו מרת לאה רייזל  
ומשפחתם שיחי' שפאלטר



לעבן מיט'ן רבי'ן



טור 'לעבן מיט'ן רבי'ן' הוקדש לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת  
ר' שמואל ב"ר יהושע אליהו ז"ל  
ואשתו מרת שרה ע"ה בת ר' יקותיאל ומרת לאה הי"ד  
ת"נ צ"ב'ה

ע"י בנם  
ר' יקותיאל יהודה  
וזוגתו מרת פעסל לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו  
רוהר

# No Need to Leave 770

CHODESH ELUL 5724\*



In Elul of the year 5724\*, Meir Freiman—a young *bochur* at the time—made the long trip from Eretz Yisrael to New York in order to be by the Rebbe for the month of Tishrei. He wrote a series of letters to his family back home (who were not Lubavitcher Chassidim) in which he vividly describes his impressions and his experiences in the Rebbe's *daled amos*.

Here we present three of these letters. With words laden with passion and emotion and a style both heartfelt and genuine, the author offers us an authentic account of a *bochur's* first experience with the Rebbe.

## YOM HABAHIR CHAI ELUL

*Baruch shehecheyanu* that I merited seeing the Rebbe's face! The expenses and hardships that the trip entailed were all worthwhile just to see the



face of the Rebbe—even if only for one time, and especially that I will be staying for all of the Yomim Tovim.

We arrived in New York at 8:00 p.m. and were greeted at the airport by a group of *bochurim* who had come by taxi from 770.

I will write to you about my travels in the coming letters. I am still overwhelmed, not from the journey or other physical reasons but rather from the glimpse that I merited to have of the Rebbe's holy face.

#### CHOF-HEY ELUL

Last night at 9:20 p.m. I went into the Rebbe's room for a private audience. I do not recall the exact *brachos* that the Rebbe blessed me with. The Rebbe's

countenance literally shined with a radiant glow and it was impossible for me to look at his face; all my limbs were trembling. It was an extremely lofty experience—something unimaginable.

All day yesterday, I was full of emotion and excitement in anticipation for this audience, which in the terminology of Chassidim is referred to as “*yechidus*.” It is a time when a Chossid and his Rebbe become one, hence the term *yechidus* (from the word *echad*). It is an opportunity for a Chossid to pour out his heart to the Rebbe; one person tells the Rebbe about his troubles, another is in desperate need of a *bracha*—in short, everyone leaves the Rebbe's room satisfied that they have accomplished that which they had come for.



COURTESY OF PINNY LEW

THE REBBE IN YECHIDUS, 5 TEVES, 5723



JEM 103186



Since I do not have any issues to discuss with the Rebbe, my main concern was to receive the Rebbe's *bracha* for the coming year. The Rebbe blessed me with success in my studies and that I should be a Chossid, *yerei Shamayim* and a *lamdan*, as well as a *bracha* for a *kesivah vachasimah tovah*. I also mentioned the members of the family and the Rebbe said that he will make mention of you at the *Tziyun* of the Frierdiker Rebbe (the Rebbe actually went there today). I also asked the Rebbe some questions that my friends asked me to ask. I was in the Rebbe's room for a total of two minutes. People are generally only able to have *yechidus* on their birthday, for their *chasuna*, or for other special occasions. An exception to this rule are people visiting from overseas; they are able to go into the Rebbe's room other than these times.

It is very interesting how the *gabbaim* and *mazkirim* (who are constantly going in and out of the Rebbe's room) behave in front of the Rebbe. Each time they enter the Rebbe's room, it is as if it is their first time in front of the Rebbe; always with the same awe and respect, and always with the same *bitul*.

In general, being here by the Rebbe one feels at home, and in some ways, even more so than in his own house. This is due to the fact that whoever you are, and from wherever you may come, you are treated as if you are family. Such brotherly love, such regard for a stranger—it is impossible to even imagine.

I will conclude with wishes for a *kesivah vachasimah tovah* for the whole family, and that we should meet again soon in Eretz Yisrael.

#### EREV ROSH HASHANAH

I have received your letter from Motzei Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim and I was gratified to hear that everyone is healthy *baruch Hashem*.

Here, one feels as if it is already Rosh Hashanah. As the Rebbe said yesterday at the farbrengen: If one prepares for something in the proper way, then *in the preparation itself* he will already have a taste of that which he is preparing for. Indeed, during these past few days, one could virtually already “feel” Rosh Hashanah.

There is no need to worry about writing to me in Yiddish and not in Ivrit, for I understand Yiddish as well. In fact, the Rebbe only speaks in Yiddish and all the *sefarim* and booklets here are also in Yiddish.



Yesterday, the Rebbe farbrenged for three hours. The atmosphere was an extremely joyous one and the presence of a *chosson*, as well as *sheva brachos* being recited, only added to the *simcha*. During one of the *niggunim*, the Rebbe motioned that they should sing even stronger... You can not possibly imagine it: The entire shul is jumping up and down nonstop, each person dancing in his place because it is impossible to move anywhere else...

Regarding your inquiries as to how I am faring both physically and spiritually: The truth is that I have not even stepped out of 770 (except for food and sleeping, of course), and there is really no need to—everything I need is right here.

Today, we heard the Rebbe recite *hataras nedarim*. Obviously, the Rebbe is not saying it for

himself, but rather on the behalf of all Yidden. As we know, a *tzaddik* is concerned for the welfare of *klal Yisroel*. Ten older Chassidim sat and listened (as the ceremony requires) while the Rebbe read the words. It was an absolutely magnificent scene: The Rebbe bedecked in his *tallis* and *tefillin*, his face radiating light...

We went today to the Ohel of the Frierdiker Rebbe (as is customary on Erev Rosh Hashanah to visit the resting place of a *tzaddik*) and there was quite a large crowd there.

There is much more to write about but time does not permit it so I will conclude with the Rebbe's *bracha* from yesterday's farbrengen: יהי רצון שתהי' לכם שנה טובה ומתוקה בבני חיי ומזונא רויחא, כתיבה וחתימה טובה בחסד וברחמים, בעגלא דידן בטוב הנראה והנגלה. ❶



RABBI YOSEF GOLDSTEIN



כתב יד  
קודש

לזכות  
החייל בצבאות ה'  
**אליעזר שמואל** שיחי'  
לרגל האפשרעניש' שלו  
**"ב מנחם אב ה'תש"פ**  
נדפס ע"י הוריו  
הרה"ת ר' **ישראל פסח**  
וזוגתו מרת **שולמית ליבא**  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
**בעניש**

# That's Why He's Here!

ה'תש"ח י"ח  
אשר

הנהו תמים ויעשה בכל בהג"ל כהמשפיע  
דתו"ת שי'

הנהגתו נשפלה ממנו אחרת נשפלה ממנו  
על ידי יצחק ושלמה וכן על ידי יצחק.

רבותינו נשיאנו תקנו משרת משפיע  
בתו"ת—בכדי שעמו ידברו וישאלוהו וכו'  
בכל כהו"ל.

לזכות  
 החייל בצבאות ה'  
 רפאל יעקב זאב שיחי'  
 לרגל הולדתו ט"ז אייר ה'תש"פ  
 ולזכות אחותו מיא רייזל תחי'  
 ולזכות הוריהם  
 הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל  
 וזוגתו מרת מושקא שיחי'  
 קראסניאנסקי  
 שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר למאוי, הוואי  
 נדפס ע"י זקניהם  
 הרה"ת ר' ראובן וזוגתו מרת אהובה  
 יהודית שיחי' ניו  
 שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר  
 לאיסט בוקה רטון, פלורידה

# From Harvard to 770

PROFESSOR YITZCHOK BLOCK



DELIVERING A LECTURE AT MACHON CHANA, 5746

The fascinating journey of a Tennessee boy from public school to Harvard to famed Aristotelian scholar—but always first and foremost, the Rebbe's shliach.

*This article is based primarily on Professor Block's interview with My Encounter by Jewish Education Media. Special thanks to Rabbi Elkanah Shmotkin and Rabbi Yechiel Cagen. Quotes from other individuals are taken from "Dr. Yitzchok Block — Inspiring Stories and Anecdotes," published by his family after his passing. A short version of this article was published in Derher - Chabad on Campus special edition.*





KOS SHEL BRACHA, MOTZOEI SIMCHAS TORAH 5749

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15

## Finding the Real Thing

Yitzchok Leib Block was born in Nashville, Tennessee, to a traditional Jewish family who kept kosher and attended the local Conservative Synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. He received the standard education for an American Jewish child: public school in the morning and *talmud Torah* each evening, culminating with a bar mitzvah. After reaching Jewish adulthood, he would be free to leave the burden of *talmud Torah*, and much of Yiddishkeit for that matter, behind.

However, things changed for young Yitzchok, or Irving, as he was called then. Within a week of his bar mitzvah, his father passed away, and he began reciting *kaddish* twice each day. “That was one of the two cardinal rules of being Jewish in those days,” he later explained. “Number one, you married only a Jew, and number two, you said *kaddish* for your parents.”

Now a regular at the local Orthodox shul, Irving became friendly with the rabbi who convinced him to continue studying about Yiddishkeit. Over time, he slowly gravitated towards Torah and mitzvos.



COURTESY OF THE BLOCK FAMILY

DR. BLOCK AS A CHILD, CIRCA 1958\*

“Everybody was talking about me. ‘What’s happened to Irving? He used to be such a nice little kid and he’s becoming a religious fanatic...”

“Throughout my teenage years, I read a lot about Judaism in English publications, but I never really had the opportunity to do concrete learning. Then, one bright day, a new person showed up in town. The whole town was talking about it. It was a young man *with a beard*. It was unheard of; it was like he just stepped off the boat.”

Rabbi Zalman Posner had been sent by the Frierdiker Rebbe to Nashville, where he assumed the post of rabbi in a local shul. Irving immediately felt connected. “I felt that he was the real McCoy. I said, ‘This is *emes*.’”

Throughout his university years, Irving would spend each morning studying Torah with Rabbi Posner.

“I began to learn for the first time in my life. Every morning after davening, after a cup of coffee, we would sit down and learn. We learned *Shnayim Ochazin B'Tallis*. It was an eye opener to me. For the first time in my life, I learned what it means to sit down and learn Torah. We grew very close.”

As he approached graduation from college, Yitzchok decided to study philosophy in graduate school and was accepted into Harvard.

“Towards the end of that year, I had to decide what to do with my summer. I was getting really involved in Gemara, so I suggested to Rabbi Posner that I spend my summer in Lubavitch. Rabbi Posner was hesitant but I insisted. I liked Rabbi Posner very much; if Lubavitch produced a guy like him, it couldn’t be too bad...”

So, one day in 5712\*, Rabbi Posner took him to 770.

## First Impressions

This wasn’t Yitzchok’s first time in 770. A year earlier, he had visited New

York for a family wedding and Rabbi Posner had suggested he visit the Rebbe. Yitzchok thought it sounded interesting so he called up 770 and made an appointment to see the Rebbe on a Thursday at ten o’clock.

“At exactly 10:00 a.m. I arrived at 770 and said that I was there to see the Rebbe. Rabbi Hodakov looked at me and said ‘What are you doing here now? Your appointment is for ten o’clock tonight...’

“I never imagined that I would have an appointment at such a strange hour. Rabbi Hodakov felt bad. He picked up the phone, spoke for a moment, and turned back to me. ‘I’m awfully sorry,’ he said, ‘but the Rebbe can’t see you now.’”

Yitzchok wasn’t prepared to brave the streets of New York late at night so he didn’t have his *yechidus*. But he did see the Rebbe.

“As I was sitting in the hallway, I noticed a young black-bearded gentleman come down the stairs, wearing a tallis, tefillin and a short jacket.<sup>1</sup> He looked at me and walked into his office.

“That was the Rebbe coming from davening. In 5711\* he would daven in the Frierdiker Rebbe’s office on the second floor and I happened to be there as davening concluded.”

## In 770

Now coming for his second visit, Yitzchok arrived in 770. The yeshiva was small in those days and the American *bochurim* immediately befriended him and set him up with a *chavrusa*.

When Rabbi Posner went into *yechidus*, Yitzchok was invited in as well.

“I can’t remember exactly what happened. We got into talking about philosophy, and he said, ‘The philosophy of Plato is very cruel.’ Plato’s social philosophy is that children should be trained like



RABBI ZALMAN POSNER, CIRCA 5727\*

wards of the state. But I had never heard anybody say that it was cruel; after all, Plato was the ‘G-d’ of philosophy... Two years later, a book came out saying that Plato’s social philosophy was—using the exact same terminology—cruel. The book caused a furor in the philosophical world, but nobody ever refuted it...”

Interestingly, although Yitzchok would later have a storied career in philosophy, the Rebbe never again discussed philosophy with him.

“My first farbrengen was Yud-Beis Tammuz 5712\* in the small *zal*,” Yitzchok recounted. “There were some 200 people present, on stacked tiers all the way to the ceiling and the whole place was steaming; you could literally see the sweat dripping from the ceiling.

“The thing that really affected me was the *niggunim* they sang. I found it overwhelming. I was greatly moved by that farbrengen although I didn’t understand a word.

“During one of the *niggunim*, the Rebbe noticed me, picked up a piece of cake and said, ‘Have you had cake yet?’ I’m a polite southern boy; I said

“Thank you very much, I had cake already.”

“The whole room went ‘Huh...’ The Rebbe smiled and put the cake back on the plate. At the end of the farbrengen, he called over Zalman Posner and gave him two pieces of cake. He came over to me and said, “The Rebbe wants you to have this piece of cake. I suggest that you make a *bracha* and eat it.”

The story had an additional element, one which Yitzchok learned only many years later, when he was living in London, Ontario, father to eight children and a distinguished Chossid.

During a discussion, Rabbi Posner said to him,

“Do you remember your first farbrengen when the Rebbe gave me a piece of cake for you? The Rebbe told me to tell you something which I never told you.

“*Zolt ir em zogen, sof sof vet er veren a Chossid; er darf nit farshporen di tzeit*—Sooner or later, he’ll be a Chossid. He shouldn’t spend all this extra time [wastefully]...”

After an enjoyable summer in 770 Yitzchok was torn. On one hand, he

## My Mother’s Connection

Dr. Block related:

My father passed away when I was very young, and the Rebbe always took interest in my mother’s well-being, although they had never met.

For example, one year after receiving *lekach* from the Rebbe on Hoshanah Rabbah, Rabbi Groner came running to call me back. The Rebbe asked me about my mother—although there was nothing out of the ordinary—and gave me a piece of cake for her, which I sent to her in Atlanta.

One time, my mother asked me to arrange a *yechidus* for her, and when she came out, I asked about the conversation.

She said, “I told him that I live by myself, and on Friday night when I light Shabbos candles, I feel very lonely.”

I felt that it was something inappropriate to tell the Rebbe, but that’s what she said.

The Rebbe looked at her and said, “You don’t have to feel lonely; *der Aibershter iz ale mol mit*—Hashem is always with you.”

She came out a calmer person. “The Rebbe helped me,” she said.

That was the whole interaction; one sentence. You see, if I would have said it to my mother, she would have brushed me off, but when the Rebbe said it to her, it made an impact. Ever since the Rebbe said that to her, she didn’t feel lonely.





LECTURING, CIRCA 5720\*

had been accepted into the post-graduate program at Harvard to continue his pursuit of a doctorate in philosophy, but on the other hand, he was immensely enjoying his time in 770. After consulting with the Rebbe in *yechidus*, he decided to go to Harvard.<sup>2</sup>

## Harvard

He spent a semester in Harvard, and soon, exams were approaching. But there was something that bothered him terribly. Harvard policy was that students were graded on a curve, meaning that only the top third of the class would pass the difficult exam, notwithstanding one's personal grades. Yitzchok was not at the top of his class and he began to feel depressed. He missed the Torah learning and camaraderie of 770 and the Harvard curriculum proved much more difficult than expected. One morning, he got onto a bus and rode back to 770.

"When I arrived back, I announced that I decided to return and study in yeshiva. Everyone welcomed me warmly. But when I went into *yechidus*, the Rebbe told me, 'I think

you will regret that you gave up your profession.' He looked at me with a smile, 'You have to have *courage*. You know what *courage* is?'

"I walked out stunned. My friends all asked, 'What did the Rebbe say?' I said, 'He says go back to Harvard.'

"Huh?"

"That was everybody's reaction. Rabbi Mentlik, Rabbi Bukiet—they were all utterly chagrined. And I got back on the bus and went back to Harvard."

Yitzchok took the exams, and failed. He received his Master's degree, but was rejected from the continuation of the program. He thought it was time to come learn in yeshiva, but the Rebbe asked, "Can't you take the exams again?"

He did, and this time, he passed.

"During my second year, exams were set for the morning after Acharon Shel Pesach. These were exams that couldn't be taken a second time, so it was crucial that I passed.

"I spent Acharon Shel Pesach in 770, and during the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe announced that everyone should drink four cups of wine. That caught me totally unprepared. I had a

## The Rebbe Saved Someone's Thesis

Dr. Block related the following story about his time in Harvard:

There was a chemistry student at Harvard working on his PhD, and the Rebbe wrote me a letter to get involved with him and draw him closer to Yiddishkeit. I started learning with him Tanya.

In his PhD, he had a problem that he couldn't solidify a certain element, and he was at his wits' end because unless he achieved this solidification, he wouldn't be able to continue with his thesis.

I said to him, "Come with me to the Rebbe. What have you got to lose?"

He had a *yechidus* for half an hour or 45 minutes, and he came out blinking his eyes. The Rebbe had suggested trying some form of radiation on this element, but he said, "There is no reason why this should solidify it."

Two days later, he called me, "Irving, I can't believe it, I put the radiation on it and it solidified."

bus to catch that night and exams were the next morning...

"Suddenly, the Rebbe looked at me and made his two handed motion which meant, 'Drink the whole cup.' Oh, my G-d, I'm supposed to take the bus at 12:00 a.m., and I was supposed to take my exam in the morning at 9:00.

"I drink the first cup of wine, and the Rebbe looks at me and says again... I said oh, my G-d... The Rebbe repeated the instruction four times. I was dizzy. I could hardly stand up. I managed to take the subway up to Port Authority. I stumbled onto the bus, and woke up in Boston. I made it at nine to take my exam, and I passed it. That was an open miracle."

The next stage was to take an oral exam to propose a topic for a dissertation, and Yitzchok failed again. He wrote to the Rebbe in despair, and the answer was the same. Take it again. Once again, this time he passed.

He began writing his dissertation while studying in 770 part time. He also found a small "side job." He taught Tanya to a large group of students in Brooklyn College and brought some 35 students to the Rebbe for a *yechidus* where they merited a question and answer session, and heard fascinating answers from the Rebbe. (The *yechidus* was later published.)<sup>3</sup>

The distractions in 770 didn't allow him to properly finish. The Rebbe kept on nudging him about finishing his dissertation, so he returned to the quiet of a Harvard library, where he finished writing his dissertation in three months, and finally received his PhD.

"At the next farbrengen I was at, the Rebbe looked at me and smiled and said, 'Yetzt kenst du hubben menuchas hanefesh—now you can have peace of mind.'

"Now, I thought, I'm going to sit in yeshiva and learn; the Rebbe has no excuse. I wanted to learn for *semicha*. I wrote in to the Rebbe, and you know what the answer was?

"Four words: 'Lo mit an aleph.' Under no circumstances whatsoever."

## Instead of Yeshiva

"I spent a half a year teaching in Yeshiva University," now Professor Block recounted. "When my students

# Chassidic encounter

Prof. Yitzchak Block will lead a weekend Chassidic encounter sponsored by the Chabad House of Berkeley, 2340 Piedmont Ave., this weekend.

A professor of philosophy at the University of Western Ontario, Dr. Block will lead

workshops, classes and "Farbrengens," or Chassidic encounters.

The first session will be held Friday at 8 p.m., continues all day Saturday and Sunday morning. The weekend is free of charge.

FARBRENGEN ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE BERKELEY GAZETTE, 6 MAY 1975\*



DR. BLOCK (IN THE TOP HAT) LEADS A FARBRENGEN AT THE PEGISHA, CIRCA 5728\*

COURTESY OF THE BLOCK FAMILY

found out that I was a Lubavitcher, they would line up after class was over and ask me questions in *emunah*. Is there a G-d? What about the Torah? They couldn't get over the fact that I had a PhD in philosophy from Harvard.

"Then I understood why the Rebbe sent me to Harvard. I had a greater effect than a hundred rabbis just by existing; without saying a word."

As he was looking for a permanent job, the Rebbe told him to take the main points of his dissertation and print them in scholarly journals. At first, he was apprehensive; his thesis on Aristotle contradicted some of the leading scholars of the day; who was he to argue with them?

With the Rebbe's encouragement, he reached out to a famous journal but they rejected his essay. The Rebbe pushed him to pull some Harvard connections and soon the essay was published and created a storm in the academic world. Professor Block was now sometimes being referred to as a leading scholar on Aristotle.

"The Rebbe always pushed me further and believed in my potential even more than I knew. Once, as I was sitting in *Gan Eden Hatachton*, the Rebbe told a couple in *yechidus* that I was a great professor. At the time, I didn't even have a job.

"The Rebbe also wanted me to write a book on Aristotle, which, to my regret, I never did. The Rebbe



STUDYING WITH STUDENTS, CIRCA 5733\*

wanted me to become as important as possible in the world of philosophy so that I would have an influence on my Jewish students. And the truth is I have, I know I have. Hundreds of students have grown closer to Yiddishkeit by mere fact that I was a professor and a Lubavitcher.”

### London, Ontario

After some time looking for a post, Dr. Block was offered a position in London, Ontario. But there was one problem: there was no Orthodox shul, no day school, and no Jewish infrastructure. He was now married with a child and London didn’t seem to be the most appropriate place to raise a Jewish family.

“The Rebbe advised me to take the job, but I asked him, ‘What will I do there?’

“*Vest gefinen vos tzu ton*—you’ll find what to do there,” the Rebbe replied.

“When I first walked into the community, I was just like Rabbi Zalman Posner in Nashville, Tennessee. They had never seen it. ‘You’re a Chossid?’ I said yes. ‘What



A CHASSIDISHER DANCE WITH DR. YAAKOV HANOKA



kind of Chossid?’ ‘A Lubavitcher Chassid.’ ‘Luba what?’ They never heard the name before.

“The first day, I got a call from the director of the local B’nai Brith. He said, ‘We have a serious problem. We have a few Jewish students here and we have no one to take care of the local Hillel; maybe you’ll undertake it?’ I couldn’t say no, so I said yes.”

As Pesach approached, they prepared to travel back to New York for Yom Tov.

Suddenly Rabbi Hodakov called him and asked, “Are you coming to New York?”

“Yes, *im yirtze Hashem*.”

“What will the students eat on Pesach?”

Dr. Block took the cue and said that he will arrange meals for the students in London.

He went to one of the old Jewish fraternities and made a deal with them: “I will give you guys a brand new oven; all I need you to do is put in these pre-cooked trays of kosher for Pesach food each night for students to eat.” They agreed to the arrangement.

He reported the plan to the Rebbe, and that *seder* night, he merited a special *kiruv*:

Before the *seder*, various close individuals would be invited into the Rebbe’s room to receive matzah. That year, the Rebbe called Dr. Block inside, and told him, “Take as many matzahs as you need.”

## Not About Drinking

Students and community members alike were drawn to Dr. Block’s intellect, coupled with his genuine sincerity.

“Dr. Block knew how to attract and keep students interested,” related a former student, Mr. Reuven Stein, after Dr. Block’s passing. “His farbrengens kept them coming back. But it wasn’t a drinking party. There was great joy and intense Torah. Dr.

Block was a deep thinker and he was sharp. This is what attracted so many of us. We could get *mashke* anywhere but we could only get Dr. Block’s Chassidus from Dr. Block. Speaking of *mashke*, who could forget the well-meaning, unknowing guest who brought Dr. Block vodka. The only problem was... it was Pesach. This was the only time I know of that Dr. Block was speechless.”

“Just as the students who had met Dr. Block in his philosophy classes could not comprehend that he was primarily a Chossid of the Lubavitcher Rebbe,” related another *mekurav*, Dan Marans, “it is hard for those of us who met him through Chabad to believe that this G-d fearing, caring, easy going, unpretentious, easily understood, fun loving sports fan had anything to do with Greek philosophy, not to mention being a Harvard educated, world renowned expert on Aristotle. Being able to sustain opposites is a G-dly trait that Dr. Block was able to achieve.”

All of Professor Block’s activities were done under the close guidance

of the Rebbe, through letters, *maanos*, and calls with Rabbi Hodakov. (In several letters, the Rebbe writes, “I will read all the *panim* at the Tziyun—which seems to mean that he was sending *panim* from many other individuals as well). Dr. Block also posed questions in Chassidus to the Rebbe, and received several answers. In Dr. Block’s archive, there are more than 30 letters (*kloli-proti*) from the Rebbe, with many additions in the Rebbe’s handwriting.

“Dr. Block told me,” says Dan Marans, “that he had a very deep relationship with the Rebbe.” After Gimmel Tammuz, when the Rebbe could no longer answer his questions in person, “he started meditating about what the Rebbe would want him to do and after a few minutes he always knew what the Rebbe would have answered.”

## The Rebbe’s Miracle Conference

The Rebbe always wanted Dr. Block to speak at conferences and produce papers on philosophy. A request once

## The Enigmatic Vechulu

Reb Mottel Chein related:

When Dr. Block got engaged, he received, like all *chasanim*, a letter from the Rebbe. He called his friends to a farbrengen at the yeshiva dormitory on Lincoln and Troy. Throughout the night, Yitzchok spoke about one thing, the greeting that opened the letter. It was a more or less standard opening: “To the G-d fearing, upright man, a Chossid etc. Yitzchok Sheyichye.” He was not perturbed or baffled by the Rebbe’s lofty descriptions of him, a newly minted Chossid.

“The Rebbe sees my soul as it exists in its supernal birthplace, in A”K, not as I appear in this world,” he said.

But he didn’t understand the “*Vechulu*.”

What could the Rebbe be alluding to? By night’s end, he arrived at a conclusion.

“With the etc. the Rebbe means to say, ‘Don’t be a *shvantz*.’

Seeing this philosophy doctoral student grapple with the meaning of the Rebbe’s letter the entire night with a sincerity rarely found in more distinguished Chassidim, affected me deeply.

came from an international conference on Greek Philosophy being held in Brown University, and Dr. Block agreed to speak. Some time later, he discovered that he was scheduled to speak on Shabbos morning.

"I wrote to the Rebbe right away, asking what I should do, but I received no answer. Another month goes by. I write again. No answer.

"I get a call a week before the conference from Rabbi Hodakov. He says I should tell the chairman that an emergency has arisen and I need to be in New York for Shabbos—could he switch my talk to Friday morning?

"I said 'You can't do that a week before...'"

With fear and trepidation, Yitzchok called the chairman. "Is it possible to switch my talk to Friday morning?"

"I was just on the verge of calling you," the chairman responded, "because the professor scheduled to speak Friday morning has come down with a terrible flu and can't make it."

Yitzchok delivered his talk on Friday morning, and rushed to a bus leaving for New York. A full three-hour trip, he was barely going to make it.

The weather was terrible. Dr. Block managed to ride the subway a bit before *shkiah* arrived and walked the rest of the way.

"I came to the farbrengen on Shabbos; the Rebbe looked at me and smiled, and said, 'Block, say *l'chaim*.'"

"Oh, I thought to myself, the Rebbe did it again... Poor fellow there—a very famous philosopher—he had to get a flu so that I should be able to give the talk on Friday and be able to come to the farbrengen for Shabbos Mevarchim..."

## Torah Institutions

The Blocks had moved into town with a one-year-old baby, their son Chaim. When time came for him to enroll in preschool, Mrs. Block

opened a Jewish preschool. When he graduated kindergarten, the Rebbe said that if they have five kids on board, they should start a Jewish day school. With time, the Jewish community had a full Jewish infrastructure, thanks to the Blocks; a preschool, day school, Orthodox *minyán*, a functioning Hillel, mikveh, and eventually, a successful Chabad House. This all took place alongside Professor Block's "official" job at the university.

Not everyone took it easily.

"I was always being accused of being too religious; 'Dr. Block is a fanatic, he's a Chossid, he wears tzitzis and a beard...' The university gave me no issue whatsoever, but many Jews in the community were incensed.

"There were many times I wanted to resign but the Rebbe always refused. I once told the Rebbe I wanted to resign because the community politics were so time consuming that it was taking away from my work at the university. The Rebbe responded, 'If you can find someone with more *yiras Shamayim* than you have, you can give it to him...'"

## A Midnight Farbrengen

In addition to his work in London, Dr. Block lectured on Yiddishkeit in many different venues, most notably at the yearly Pegisha, where he

would hold his famous "Midnight Farbrengen."<sup>4</sup>

"Those first few years of the sixties and seventies," Dr. Block related, "were the real good years. The hippies were the best *keilim* you could possibly imagine, and the Rebbe knew it and made sure we utilized the opportunity.

"I don't remember when or how it actually started, but at some point we started having midnight farbrengens on Motzei Shabbos of the Pegisha. Now there was always an official program for *melave malka* with a speaker and all but this happened a couple hours after that had concluded. Rabbi Hanoka<sup>5</sup> was not at all happy with this because it completely ruined the schedule. Let's be honest, if you are up until five in the morning farbrenging there is no way you can be ready for eight o'clock when the Sunday program is supposed to start.

"Those farbrengens were very uplifting and inspiring. I remember how there were buses waiting for many people who would go directly from the farbrengen to Morristown in order to spend the day in yeshiva. A lot of people became frum through those late night and unofficial farbrengens."

Rabbi Shmuel Lew, who was heavily involved in the Pegisha in those years, relates, "In one of the earliest Pegishas, the students were asking Dr. Block many questions, and he answered every one of them—he



DR. BLOCK WITH THE STUDENTS OF THE LONDON HEBREW DAY SCHOOL HE FOUNDED. CIRCA 5731\*

## Vodka Vs. Water

Rabbi Yossie Nemes relates:

When I was on shlichus in South Africa between 5745 and 5747, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks farbrenged with a group of about 100 people and related the following.

He had been to several Pegisha weekends in New York and his favorite part had always been the Motzei Shabbos farbrengen with Dr. Block. One year, he and some of his friends who were already veterans of these Pegishos, noticed that Dr. Block had set aside a bottle of vodka to use at the farbrengen after Shabbos. They played a prank on him by pouring out the vodka and filling the bottle with water. They waited with baited breath for their prank to play out.

The next day when the farbrengen began, Dr. Block asked for a *l'chaim*. They all watched as he said a *bracha* and drank from the cup. He looked around and said, "This is the difference between a Chossid and a non-Chossid. They look the same... they both keep Shabbos and put on tefillin, but it is like water and vodka. One is just plain, the other fills you with warmth and inspiration."

despite the sometimes difficult circumstances, the Rebbe never allowed him to move away.

"I kept getting offers from other universities, UCLA, Claremont Graduate School in Los Angeles, and others, and I kept asking the Rebbe if I should accept them. But I never received an answer. I had an offer from Stony Brook in Long Island, which meant I could move to Crown Heights and practically live in 770... No answer.

"The Rebbe never told me to do something if he knew that I didn't want to do it. There were situations that I know of where the Rebbe gave people instructions which he knew they wouldn't want to do. But in my case, he never did it.

"Finally, I told my wife, 'Look, the Rebbe is not going to agree to our move. He wants us to stay here...'

"My entire life has been a series of miracles from the Rebbe. Step after step, I could never have succeeded in doing any of those things myself.

"I feel like the Rebbe said, 'I'm going to take this guy who thinks nothing of himself, and make him into a great philosopher, because it's important that he should have an influence on Jewish students. That's what he had in mind.

"And today, hundreds of people, if not more, have been affected. Without exaggeration." **1**

1. This story took place before the Rebbe publicly accepted the *nesius* on Yud Shevat 5711.
2. For more on the Rebbe's guidance about attending college, see *Derher* Sivan 5777, pg. 38, "How to Make a Living."
3. *Toras Menachem* vol. 20, p. 394. Chabad.org/392177.
4. For the full history of Pegisha, see *Derher* Adar II 5779 pg. 12, "Changing Lives Forever."
5. Rabbi Dr. Yaakov Hanoka was a prominent scientist and *baal teshuva* who was very involved in the Pegisha. For his own fascinating story, see *Derher* Elul 5776 pg. 38, "The First of Thousands."



COURTESY OF THE BLOCK FAMILY

PRESENTING THE CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER WITH A SIDDUR, CIRCA 5750\* (SEE *DERHER* ISSUE 53, A *LIGHT UNTO THE NATIONS* FOR THE STORY BEHIND THIS GIFT).

PICTURED ARE RABBI ZALMAN AHARON GROSSBAM, RABBI BEREL MOCHKIN, DR. BLOCK, RABBI AVROHOM ALTEIN, PRIME MINISTER BRIAN MULRONEY

was brilliant. Then, they asked him how he had become religious. He said, 'I'm not on a psychiatrist's couch,' and he refused to answer the question.

"Somehow, the Rebbe got wind of this, and sent him a *tzettel* telling him

that he should tell his story. That day at brunch, he related the entire story."

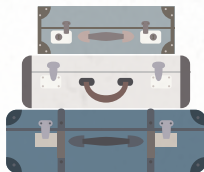
### What The Rebbe Wants

Without the official title of shliach, Professor Block transformed Jewish life on his campus and the local community. In fact, as mentioned,



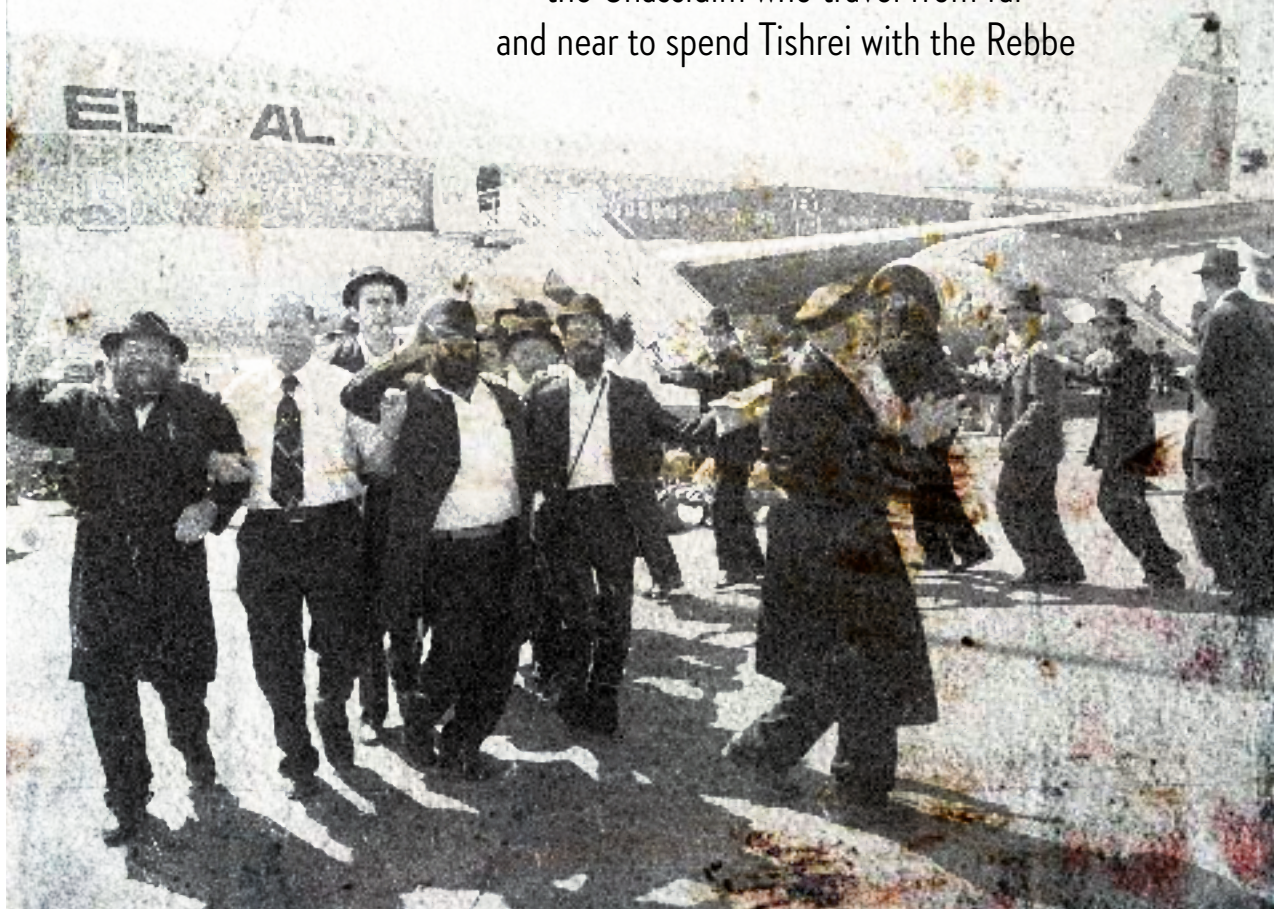
REB ZUSHE PULLS THE PILOT INTO  
THE FESTIVITIES, 16 ELUL 5737\*

לעילוי נשמת  
מרת לאה בת הרה"ח ר' אליהו נחום ע"ה  
בלאק  
גלב"ע כ"ה אלול ה'תשע"ג  
תנ"צ'ב'ה'  
נדפס ע"י  
משפחתה שיחיו



# “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 20455

## 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 Friediker 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.'*

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 *giluyim* 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 shlichim for a 10-day trip to Eretz Yisroel to elevate the spirits of *anash*.<sup>2</sup>

Six weeks after their return, during the *farbrengen* of Shabbos Nitzavim-Vayeilech 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 מזמרת הארץ.

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 trip<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

### *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.

*“Since the Gemara states, and the Rambam writes this as a halacha, that גדולה הכנסת אורחים מהקבלת פני השכינה—welcoming guests is greater than greeting the Shechina... it would be appropriate for me to welcome each one of the guests personally. Since this is not possible due to the time constraints during the days before Rosh Hashanah, this farbrengen should be considered as if I welcomed each guest personally. Those who came from overseas, those who came from other parts of the country and even the locals who are also guests.”<sup>5</sup>*

During the farbrengen the Rebbe said a maamar *kein sicha* with the *dibbur hamaschil* “גדולה הכנסת אורחים—מהקבלת פני השכינה—Hosting guests is greater than greeting the face of the Shechina.”<sup>6</sup>

From then on every year, one of the farbrengens during Elul was considered a *kabbalas ponim* for the orchim. In addition, the Rebbe instructed that the annual Tzach convention that took place on Sukkos should serve as a *kabbalas ponim* 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.”<sup>7</sup> 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\*

LEVI FREDIN VIA JEM 266491

### *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 תשכ"א (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.



MORDECHAI BARON VIA JEM 146434

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.<sup>8</sup>)

### *Even Greater than Avraham Avinu*

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*.



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 505840

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

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

known simply as “אש” 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.

### *A 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, ישר 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 עונג—delight]. Many thanks, and by next year may we be in Yerushalayim.**

Then the Rebbe turned to the *orchim* and bentched them all:

שתה' שבת שמחה, ושכל השנה תה' 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:



LEVI FREDIN VIA JEM 213706

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 *hakafo*s 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.

### *A 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

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 אין קמח אין תורה, 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.”<sup>9</sup>
- “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.”<sup>10</sup>

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.”<sup>11</sup>

### **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

### *The Delayed Flight*

It was 28 Elul 5739\* and a group of 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.”<sup>12</sup>



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 18374

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 kloris* began.<sup>13</sup>

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 עלי 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

Chassidim 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 תצאו, כי 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**

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 Lcha 5748.
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.



JEM 103186



THE REBBE ENCOURAGES THE SINGING,  
30 TISHREI 5722\*

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 143272



ORCHIM DANCE AS THEY DEPART 770 WHILE  
THE REBBE LOOKS ON, 1 CHESHVAN 5736



לזכות  
משפחת קארנפעלד  
בורביינק, קאליפורניא



# Self-Care for Communal Leaders

*Rabbi Alexander Zusha Ben-Nun (Bunin) was the supervisor of the Oholei Yosef Yitzchak Lubavitch network of schools in Eretz Yisroel. He and his wife founded the “Beiteinu” school in Ra’anana. In this letter, the Rebbe addresses how he should ensure his own spirituality is accounted for while he’s spending the bulk of his time working with others.*



Rabbi Alexander Zuscha, *sheyichye*  
Greetings and blessings!

...Regarding the point of your letter where you write that occasionally you make a *chesbon hanefesh* about the fact that you're busy educating others, but [you are concerned] about your own situation, which you have no time for.

You certainly know that this problem and this depression are age-old issues, disturbing anyone who is involved with communal work in general, and in particular in the area of communal work that completely occupies and encompasses the person. It is also clear that the solution and answer to this question is not the same for every person and in every place; times of peace aren't the same as times of war, nor times of crisis to ordinary years. Of course, one cannot compare someone with natural talent for activism to someone who has to push himself to do it. These things are clear and obvious if you think about them for even a short time with the worldview of our Torah, the "Torah of Life," whose "Great Rule" is to love one's fellow as oneself, and that whoever saves a single life is considered to have saved the whole world.

Accordingly, it is obvious that in our generation—an orphaned generation, but on the other hand, the generation of *ikvesa d'Meshicha*, the end of *galus* and immediate preparation for the beginning of the true *geulah*, about which it is said that it will be a complete *geulah*, meaning that not one Yid will remain in *galus*; both literal *galus* and spiritual *galus*—it is necessary that everyone participate in gathering *Yiddische neshamos* and bringing them close to the Redeemer of the Yidden, Hashem, who is the Giver of the Torah and mitzvos. No one is exempt from this holy work; at the very least [dedicate] some time each day, week, and month. The more a person's capabilities for this are, the more time he must spend doing it. This means that for some people, this is their primary work, and everything else

they do is to enable them to do this. In other words, this is the mitzvah in which you are "exceedingly scrupulous" (דב"י הוה זהיר טפי) (see the Alter Rebbe's *Igeres Hakodesh*, end of ch. 7, and *Sefer Hasichos Summer 5700* p. 22 and the footnote there). All of your Torah and mitzvos ascend through this mitzvah and all the blessings are drawn down through this mitzvah.

It is also clear that in order to collect the G-dly sparks and in order to bring people closer, it is not enough to be "saturated;" you must be "saturated enough to make another saturated."<sup>1</sup> This is something that is entrusted to each individual: to set aside as much time each day as necessary to work on yourself, מיט זיך און אין זיך [=with yourself and on yourself], even though most of your time is spent helping others. So that you don't err in estimating [how much time you should spend on working on yourself], you must remember well the saying we heard from my father-in-law, the Rebbe: "Just as you are not allowed to ignore your shortcomings, so too, you may not ignore your qualities." Another time he said, "The prohibition of *lashon hara* is not only regarding others, but also regarding oneself."<sup>2</sup> Since Hashem demands this of you, it is certain that you're able to fulfill it. It shouldn't have any effect if the beginning is beset by challenges or even stumbling-blocks, as Chazal tell us, "A person does not succeed in understanding words of Torah unless he stumbles in them [first]."<sup>3</sup> There can be no greater lesson than this [for your situation, for you are dealing with matters] in the *halachos* of saving lives.

To use the Alter Rebbe's expression (Tanya ch. 44):

"Although [one may ask,] who is the man and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to approach and attain even a thousandth part of the degree of love felt by [Moshe,] 'The Faithful Shepherd,' nevertheless a minute portion and particle" [of Hashem's great goodness] exists in



every Yid, especially in activists involved in *chinuch*. [This portion of Hashem's goodness exists] at least in potential. It is therefore appropriate to consider the Torah of the Baal Shem Tov, which we heard from my father-in-law, the Rebbe, on Shabbos Bereishis 5697\*, on the *possuk* "Arise, shine forth<sup>4</sup> (קומי אורי)" as it was transcribed by someone who heard it:

"דער מאמר פון בעש"ט איז געווען לנשיאי ישראל, ואמר להם, איר נשיאי ישראל וואס לערנט אידן תורה און טוט פאר טובת הרבים וואס וועט זיין מיט אייך אליין, אויף דעם איז דער ענטפער, קומי אורי באור הפרטי והכללי כי בא אורך"

—The *maamar* of the Baal Shem Tov was to *nesiei Yisroel*, and he told them, 'You, *nesiei Yisroel*, who teach Yidden Torah and do things for the good of the multitudes—what will be of you yourselves? The answer to this is: 'Arise, shine forth—with the personal and general light—for your light has come.'"

Although, due to the missing end of the transcript, the conclusion of the matter is unclear, the problem is clear and it is also clear that we set aside Torah and *avodah* for the benefit of the community, and not only is this behavior allowed, but they are blessed with personal and general illumination as well.

To fully understand this matter to its depths, there is much to say at length, more than what is known, but since we are speaking practically, the way to decide how to act is known, as the Rebbe Rashab said, "Take this rule and remember it always: For anything that benefits or leads to actual *avodah*, any obstacle to that—even if the obstacle is a lofty one indeed—is merely a trick from the *nefesh habehamis*." (Printed in *Hayom Yom* 23 Sivan 5703).

If you will listen to me, strengthen yourself in your work of educating Jewish boys and girls, whom you influence in and out of school. Look at the matter as it is in truth, at its essence—you are involved with people who are all children of Hashem. Anything that brings them closer to our Father in Heaven and any action done for this lasts forever above and gives endless *nachas* to Hashem. It is just that in order for this *avodah* to be successful, you and your wife need to be living examples for those you influence; i.e. living examples of a Jewish man and woman who live by the words of our holy Toah, and are permeated with the luminary of Torah, Chassidus. This requires a firm personal commitment, a commitment of time, and the study of Chassidus and keeping its guidelines and customs. Then, it is certain that the assurance will be fulfilled, that "Your mind and heart will become a thousand times as pure" (נעשה מוחו ולבו זכים אלף פעמים ככה), and this number of 1,000 is not an exaggeration. This means that by learning for one hour, you succeed in absorbing qualitatively and quantitatively as much as another would need 1,000 hours

to accomplish. In your personal life, too, you will ascend, going from strength to strength.

Of course, it's not an easy *avodah*, but where does the idea come from that every Yid needs to seek out an easy *avodah*? Especially nowadays, when the *Shechina* is in *galus* and there is doubled and redoubled darkness, and everything is with great effort. More than what I've written here is written between the lines, and I hope that this too will be enough if you consider it. May it be that we both reach the same understanding, since we both have the same goal—to spread forth the wellsprings of Chassidus so that they increasingly overtake, to the point of overtaking all of our Yiddish nation, and no man will teach his fellow [to know Hashem, for everyone will know Hashem]<sup>5</sup> and the world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem.<sup>6</sup>

It is obvious that all of the above does not contradict what I believe I've written several times about your helping Kfar Chabad—on the contrary, this will actually help with that, as the Mishnah guarantees, one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah.<sup>7</sup>

As we approach Pesach, the time of our freedom, may it come to us and all Yidden for good, I bless you with a kosher and happy festival and true freedom; freedom from physical worries and from spiritual worries about anything that inhibits serving Hashem with joy and glad-heartedly, and may this freedom and joy continue forth to the entire year, especially since serving Hashem, as our Torah—the Torah of life—instructs us, applies to everything in a person's life, all day and night, as it is said, "In all your ways you shall know Him."<sup>8</sup>

With the festival's greetings; may we share good news,<sup>9</sup> **T**

1. A halachic concept relating to the definition of something as wet. One way to define it is when something is "saturated enough to make something saturated," i.e. so saturated that if you were to touch it, your hand would be saturated to the point that the next thing your hand touches would become wet as well. See Brachos 25b, Yoma 78a. Here, the Rebbe is saying that one needs to be so saturated with Torah and mitzvos that the person one teaches can go on to teach others.

2. In other words, put aside as much time as you need to work on yourself but don't underestimate your qualities and thus overestimate how much time you need to work on yourself.

3. Gittin 43a. As Kli Yakar (Bereishis 45:24:5) explains, that in which a person makes mistakes is what they remember best, for someone who makes a mistake once or twice guards himself from it in the future.

4. Yeshayahu 60, 1.

5. Yirmiyahu 31, 33.

6. Yeshayahu 11, 9.

7. Mishnayos Maseches Avos 4, 2.

8. Mishlei 3, 6.

9. Igros Kodesh vol. 15, #5355 — p. 28.



# Fire!

The Alter Rebbe's home in Vitebsk had a flat roof which he would often use as a quiet place to learn and daven.

On his first trip back home from Mezritch he went up to the roof by himself. No one was concerned about his whereabouts or condition as this was fairly routine.

That suddenly changed when his family members heard a loud thump; it sounded like the Alter Rebbe had fallen down.

His wife, Rebbetzin Sterna, and his brother-in-law, Reb Eliezer, rushed upstairs to see what had happened. Upon reaching

the roof, they found him sprawled out with outstretched hands and feet. It seemed to them that he had fainted and they attempted to wake him up.

"Wait," said Reb Eliezer upon closer examination, "it does not seem like he has fainted. Those are not the symptoms he is showing. I think it's best if we left him be."

After a while, the Alter Rebbe woke up and explained what had taken place.

"While I was in the middle of davening, I saw in heaven a terrible decree against the city of Vitebsk. It was destined to be burnt

to the ground! I quickly started to daven that the city should be spared this tragedy and remain standing and safe. *Baruch Hashem*, I was able to remove the edict. However, from every decree, there remains a small mark. The mark and minute fulfillment of this will be that one house will burn down but it won't be in the Jewish ghetto."

As soon as the Alter Rebbe concluded his story, terrible cries were heard from the streets of Vitebsk. "Fire! Fire! Fire! Quickly gather some precious items and run away. Save yourselves and children!"

Hearing the alarming cries, the members of the Alter Rebbe's household immediately began scrambling around to salvage as many valuables as they could.

Seeing all this, the Alter Rebbe called out, "What are you afraid of?! I already told you that only one house will burn down and it won't affect us."

The commotion dissipated, the fire was put out and indeed it was exactly as the Alter Rebbe had said. **1**

(*Reshimos Devorim* (new edition), page 74, story 9)



חינוך על טהרת הקודש

# PURITY OF THE MIND

*Educating children only with Torah*





לזכות  
הת' יהושע חיים שיחי'  
לרגל יום הולדתו ה' אלול  
שימשיך ללכת מחיל אל חיל  
לנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר  
נדפס ע"י הוריו  
הרה"ת ר' אברהם אבא וזוגתו מרת  
טויבא יונה ומשפחתם שיחיו  
פרידמאן



*At all times, and in all places, no-one is allowed to desecrate the religious sentiments of their fellow, even if they are coming from the government, and especially not in this free country.*

*Especially now, at a time when our brothers and sisters are being cruelly murdered, slaughtered, and butchered by the Agagi [the Nazis]*

*At a time that terrible danger hangs over the holiness of the land of our fathers, may Hashem have mercy on the land and on us,*

*At a time when our Jewish brothers of America are risking their lives on the battlefields of land, air, and sea,*

*At a time when this country needs heavenly mercies that the enemy not come to our shores and nearby, and that the American army and its allies succeed in the war for justice and peace,*

*At a time when the president of this country, President Roosevelt, is stirring the [nation's] feelings of belief, so that every nation turns to their G-d, that the light will overcome the darkness,*

*—At this time the members of the committee are considering a decree—may it never be—that touches on the apple of our eye, to desecrate what is holy to us.<sup>1</sup>*

With these stirring words, the Frieddiker Rebbe rallies against a possible law requiring *limudei chol* to be taught in the morning, before *limudei kodesh*.

What is so horrible about such a law that merits such a response? More generally, what is the Lubavitcher philosophy about studying secular studies in schools? Should all schools be teaching *limudei kodesh* exclusively? Should parents pull their children out of the secular studies program? Did the Rebbe agree to a secular studies program?

In the following article, we will explore the Rebbe's opinion on this matter, taken directly from the *sichos* and letters on the subject.

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## WHAT IS THE ISSUE WITH LIMUDEI CHOL?

What, exactly, is the problem with secular studies, and what is included in secular studies?

In *perek ches* of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe explains various levels of *kelipos*, and how each of them affect a person: frivolous talk, *lashon hara*, and so on. Secular studies, the Alter Rebbe says, have a uniquely detrimental effect on a person: whereas other things affect a person's emotions and such, secular studies defile the *mind*, they make a person's very brain *tamei*.

The Rebbe points out that the Alter Rebbe doesn't use the term *assur* or *passul*—but *tamei*, impure. When something becomes *tamei*, there is no apparent trace, it doesn't look any different. Yet—it changes fundamentally, to the extent that anyone who even touches it for even a single moment cannot enter the Beis Hamikdash! *Tumah* is so serious that it affects even a newborn child: In no other area are an old person and an infant the same—except *tumah*; when an infant touches *tumah*, even he changes fundamentally, and cannot touch *kodshim* or *terumos*. From this we can understand the seriousness of *chachmos chitzoniyos*: it makes one's mind *tamei*!<sup>2</sup>

This is more serious by children than adults. Naturally, the mind of a child is completely pure of sin—like Gan Eden before the sin, or when Moshiach comes—and the only way it can become impure is if one goes and introduces impurity to it. Thus, one must be very careful not to defile their minds by teaching them *limudei chol*.<sup>3</sup>

This is especially true in the early few years of a child's education: "The first three years of a child's studies," the Rebbe said, "are the most important foundation for his future success—yet they take a child and defile his mind with English, grammar, and so on!

"If only adults wouldn't know these things either! How much more so children, until nine-years-old, twelve-years-old—I would say even later, but *tafasta meruba lo tafasta...* Hashem says that He doesn't need Gan Eden, he doesn't need the Beis Hamikdash—all He wants is to dwell within them, within the mind of a Yiddishe child—yet they take this mind and defile it with secular subjects!"<sup>4</sup>

This refers to all secular subjects, not only subjects with anti-religious content, like philosophy. As the Rebbe explains in a letter, the Alter Rebbe explicitly writes that he is referring to subjects that are *kelipas noga*—neutral in content, including math and such (as well as grammar and English as mentioned in the *sicha* above).<sup>5</sup>

## THE TRUE STANDARD

Thus, it's clear from the Rebbe's letters and *sichos* that the ultimate goal is for the students to learn purely *limudei kodesh*. In an uncharacteristically warm letter, the Rebbe congratulates Rabbi Moshe Pinchas Katz upon enrolling his eight-year-old son (Rabbi Zev Katz) in an entirely *limudei kodesh* class:

*I was happy to receive your letter with good and blessed news that you arranged for your son Zev Yechezkel Shlita Hakohen to learn limudei kodesh the entire day, and that you also helped arrange a special track for this purpose. Thus, you have the merit of the public as well... This [zechus] is multiplied, for every single day that your son learns limudei kodesh in the hours that he would have been learning other studies... May you report good news constantly and forever....*

Obviously, you may show this letter to everyone else who did the same thing, and you should certainly show it to those who haven't yet made the truly good choice, and who haven't yet received these merits. "Every action bears fruit," especially when you speak with words that come from the heart and enter the heart. May Hashem give you success to be a good shliach in this lofty endeavor as well.<sup>6</sup>

In one revealing letter, the Rebbe encourages someone to continue their fight for purely *limudei kodesh*: "It is shocking that there are people giving reasons against [learning purely *limudei kodesh*], for there is no rational reason for it (although it seems that their logic is being twisted by their will)... May Hashem give you the merit and success *tzu durchbrechen dem eiz* [break through the ice] that seems to exist in your community, and may you transform this coldness to the light and warmth of holiness, the light and warmth of Chassidus."<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the Rebbe wrote that children themselves might feel an instinctive revulsion to secular studies. In a letter about a child who "prefers playing over learning, especially secular subjects," the Rebbe begins with an assurance that there's nothing to be concerned about, for it is very normal for children to enjoy playing, especially at that age.

But, the Rebbe adds, "you should reduce the amount of hours spent on secular studies—if you cannot cancel it completely—for perhaps this is a sign that he does not want to learn secular studies (although he himself does not understand the deeper reason for it), and it's also affecting his *limudei kodesh* studies."<sup>8</sup>

The Rebbe also advised such an approach for parents who wanted their children to be healthy. "You should minimize, at least, the amount of *limudei chol* that they learn until a certain age, and add in their *limudei kodesh*—they will pick up the *limudei chol* from the streets... By doing so they will be more healthy physically, for Yidden need to have harmony between body and soul, and when their neshamah gains, their body gains as well."<sup>9</sup>

## SECULAR STUDIES— TOOLS IN LIFE?

But how will a child succeed in life without the tools of a basic education? How will he make it without a rudimentary English?

In an emotional farbrengen<sup>10</sup> on Simchas Torah 5715\*, the Rebbe spoke strongly against such a mindset. If something is useful to us, the Rebbe said, the Torah, our guidebook instructs us to do it; if we would need to study English and secular subjects in order to make it in life, there would have been a *din* written in the Torah that we need to learn it. But not only does Torah not mandate it, Torah explicitly forbids it and tells us that it defiles the mind! This means that it will not help a person in life at all, but to the contrary!

"Some people think that they can outsmart Hashem; instead of using the tools that Hashem gave us for success, in Torah, they will look for their own methods of success—to study English—and then they will be successful. They must remember: Hashem created the world 5,714 years ago. Since then, he has been running it as he wishes, according to Torah, and he will continue to do so!

"Hashem gave the Torah to the Yidden over 3,000 years ago, and our *batlanishe* nation that does not learn grammar, etc. is standing strong! All the other nations, with all their *chachmos*, are gone. The Yidden, the *batlanishe* nation that has no *chachmos* and no expertise in the ways of the world—are standing strong, holding on to the Torah!



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“Thus, the argument that these studies will benefit them has no standing... Yet the parents come and steal years of their children’s lives! What right do they have to steal their children’s years! Is that why Hashem gave you children, so that you can take from their lives?! If you can’t overcome your *yetzer hara*, should you be putting that on the lives of your children?!”

(In the following *sicha*, the Rebbe said that if anyone was thinking that these words were applicable to them, they should know that it was meant for them. “You should know that I meant it for you! And you should start listening!”)

As the Rebbe put it in another *farbrengen*<sup>11</sup>: “The Rabbeim gave us a warning, that if anyone comes and argues that you must think about the future of the children and teach them secular studies, then you must disregard how they are giving their message, whether they are speaking openly or dressing it up in the style of our sages—because this is the *yetzer hara*! He might be quoting *maamarei chazal*, but he is distorting them...”

“Throughout all the generations, Yidden would cover the child with a tallis to bring them into *cheder*, so that they wouldn’t get affected by the *ayin hara*—meaning the *satan* and *yetzer hara*—which cannot handle Jewish children learning Torah. Instead of that, people are taking Jewish children and putting them into the hands of the *yetzer hara*, to tear them away from Torah!”

## THE REASON WHY SOME SCHOOLS DO TEACH IT

If it is so important to only study *limudei kodesh*, why is it that many religious and Lubavitcher schools do, in fact, have secular studies?

1. The main reason (mentioned by the Rebbe often when discussing this issue) was the legal challenges involved.
2. Another reason is that this could attract additional students who would only attend a school with secular subjects.

This brought about a nuanced approach, as the Rebbe writes in a letter to Rabbi Shmuel Abba Senig of Munich:

“Regarding the founding of a school where they would study both *limudei kodesh* and *lehavdil limudei chol*, this varies depending on the place and the people. We find both extremes: In certain situations, our Rabbeim opposed it completely; in other situations, they helped such schools from behind the scenes, although they themselves didn’t establish them. This was very rare but it did happen sometimes. Thus, you must judge the situation and decide.”<sup>12</sup> (In another letter to him, the Rebbe writes that it depends on the situation in the community and whether such a school would be pulling them to the right or to the left.<sup>13</sup>)

Thus, Rabbis Nachman Sudak and Avraham Korf related that when they set about to start day schools in their respective communities, the Rebbe instructed them to include a secular studies program, which would attract students from the broader crowd.

In a *sicha*, the Rebbe gives deeper insight into this: Being that we are coming closer and closer to the *geula*, it is critically important to reach every single spark of *Elokus*—even if we must be lenient in certain things in order to do so. That’s why, the Rebbe said, the Rabbeim stopped fighting wars against *limudei chol*—even though it used to be completely out of the question—for it enabled them to reach more and more sparks. However, the Rebbe added, this was only after they taught

the children more Chassidus, as a counter for *limudei chol*—and one must never forget that it's only a temporary solution.<sup>14</sup>

## SECULAR SUBJECTS IN BEIS RIVKAH

Following the *sicha* of Yud Shevat 5737\*, when the Rebbe spoke forcefully about going on *mesiras nefesh* to keep the purity of education (see below), the director of Beis Rivkah, Mrs. Chana Gurevitch, asked the Rebbe whether they should cancel the *limudei chol*.

The Rebbe replied:

That is **utterly impossible** with the current laws, the *dina dimalchusa*, here [in New York]!

(Igros Kodesh vol. 32 p. 112)

## DON'T LOSE SIGHT

The Rebbe explained that the Rabbeim's occasional support for *limudei chol* can be compared to the approach of doctors helping patients:

In a hospital, the patients have unique lifestyles: They rest the entire day without working; they have many meals a day; they walk around in white gowns; they imbue special medicines that are dangerous if taken in the wrong quantity; and so on. This is what will heal them.

But imagine if you would take a healthy person and put him in the hospital to live the hospital lifestyle, to rest the entire day and do nothing else. Not only wouldn't it help him, he would get dangerously sick!

The same is true with the educational institutions that teach *limudei chol*: These were established to help people who have a spiritual sickness in one of their spiritual limbs, in one of the mitzvos. Torah demands from us to have these institutions to help these people, and we must do everything possible in order to develop and strengthen these *mosdos*, in order to save Jewish *neshamos*—each of which is an entire world. But everyone must remember that this is like a hospital! It's only being done because there is no other way to heal these *neshamos*!

This is especially important, the Rebbe pointed out, for the people who are involved in the schools—the teachers, parents, and students.

Returning to the example of a hospital: Regular people would never dream of trying the lifestyle of the hospital. But people who have been sick and were hospitalized—they are the ones who must constantly remember that this isn't how life is supposed to be and that they should never get used to it! This applies also to the doctors who work the entire day in the hospital saving lives: They must never forget that this is only for sick people, and if they were to treat healthy people in the same way—they would be harming them.

The same is true in the schools with *limudei chol*: One must always emphasize to the people intimately involved—the educators, parents, and even children—that they should not be lulled into the notion that this is a healthy approach; it is only

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meant to heal the spiritually sick and gather all the spiritual sparks. As soon as one is healthy—one should begin acting like healthy people.

## UPLIFTING THE LIMUDEI CHOL

In a letter to a Rabbi Shneur Zalman Serebransky, who was having legal difficulties dedicating time in his school to *limudei kodesh*, the Rebbe advises him to fill the *limudei chol* with holiness: To study Jewish history from Tanach, and so on. (This was only a temporary solution, and the Rebbe advised him on lobbying the department of education to enable them to study more *limudei kodesh*.)<sup>15</sup>

The Rebbe had this outlook on a more general plane as well: All *limudei chol* should be studied in an uplifted manner. At one farbrengen the Rebbe said that he didn't even want to use the term *limudei chol* because the truth of the matter is that they should be studied in a pure manner, *al taharas hakodesh*, so that the *limudei chol* is a preparation for the *limudei kodesh*. For example, the Rebbe said, math should be studied with the goal of understanding the mathematical calculations in Eiruvim, or the astronomical calculations of Kiddush Hachodesh.<sup>16</sup>

## THERE ARE NO LAWS ABOUT YOUR ATTITUDE

This was also the Rebbe's message for yeshivos and schools that have *limudei chol* for legal reasons: There is no law about your *attitude* towards *limudei chol* and *how* you should approach it.

Now, even regarding the existing laws one must have the correct attitude, as the Rebbe said in a *sicha*<sup>17</sup>—which was later edited and published: “Your focus should be less on fulfilling the laws of the country and more on fulfilling the mitzvos and laws of, *lehavdil*, Hashem. You swore an oath to do so at Har Sinai before there were ever laws of this country.” Of course, existing laws need to be adhered to, the Rebbe added, but there is no requirement about your attitude.

In a letter to a national conference of heads of yeshivos in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe puts it succinctly: “Being that students are impressionable, both from direct influences and indirect influences, they are certainly affected by the attitude towards these two subjects [*limudei kodesh* and *limudei chol*]. It is absolutely necessary for the child to see clearly that although both of these subjects are studied in the yeshiva, the primary focus is the study of our living Torah, and the secular studies are only secondary and much less important than the main thing.”<sup>18</sup>

The child must always know that although he studies both subjects, they are not the same at all: During *limudei kodesh* he is studying holiness and purity, and then, during *limudei chol*, he is studying subjects of nature—and only because there



are spiritual sparks there. He should therefore give it only the minimum attention necessary.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, however, the Rebbe saw that many educational institutions had gotten their priorities wrong: Instead of remembering that the secular subjects are only there for legal reasons, they put greater emphasis on the secular studies than *lehavdil* the *limudei kodesh*.

The Rebbe pointed to several areas that schools need to focus on in order to keep their priorities straight:

## THE EMPHASIS ON LIMUDEI KODESH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In a Purim farbrengen,<sup>20</sup> the Rebbe quoted a Gemara that explains that the Yidden were given the terrible decree of annihilation because “they enjoyed the banquet of that *rasha* [Achashveirosh].” But, the Rebbe, asked, why was attending so bad?

The problem wasn’t that they ate non-kosher food, the Rebbe said; and the problem wasn’t so much that they actually attended the banquet. The problem was that their pride and enjoyment *stemmed* from dining with the *rasha*—they enjoyed the banquet *because* it was the *rasha*’s.

It’s one thing to attend the banquet—even a *tzadik* can fail at a *nisayon*—but why are you enjoying it? And why are you so proud that you merited to sit with this *rasha*?!

The same is true with schools, the Rebbe said: It’s one thing to teach *limudei chol* because of the requirement to do so. “But why do you enjoy the banquet?! Why do you enjoy the fact that a student knows what Shakespeare wrote?!”<sup>21</sup> If you think that there’s no other way, at least go into a room and cry about the fact that this is what you must do. But instead, you have deep pleasure that you arranged for another 30 children to eat from the banquet of the *rasha*!”

Why, the Rebbe asked, are schools *more* proud of their students’ secular accomplishments than their *limudei kodesh* accomplishments? Why are they so proud that they were able to impress even a non-religious teacher?!

When a student knows by heart 100 *blatt* Gemara or a certain amount of chapters in Mishnayos—it’s taken for granted. No-one gets overly excited, not the *roshei yeshivos*, not the teachers, and not even the parents. Of course, the parents are happy but they won’t buy him a car for it; the *yeshivos* are happy but they don’t publicize it.

But when a student is proficient in the works of Shakespeare, or some other drunk, and can deliver an analysis of the language and psychology—that’s when a *gevaldiker shturem* is made. The administration and *roshei yeshivos* publicize their amazing “accomplishment:” That they took a *bochur* who could have studied *limudei kodesh* all day, and instead they put him into the “the banquet of the *rasha*” so that he has successfully studied Shakespeare and even his secular teacher must admit that he is good! The parents are so excited that they purchase him a car, send him to the country on vacation, and make family events complete with photographs.

They themselves know that this child doesn’t come close to the one who finished 100 *blatt* Gemara so why don’t they publicize in the newspapers that the student completed this and this amount of Gemara?!

This attitude affects the children as well and ruins the very foundations of their education. When the children see that when they know this-and-this amount of

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lines written by “that rasha,” *es iz nisht shaychus tzu zogen*, everyone is excited. But when it comes to the words of *lehavdil*, Abaye and Rava, the Rambam, *rishonim* and *acharonim*, until the Rama—*meheichi teisi*, it’s no big deal! *Dayecha she’ani u’boraacha makirim kochacha!* (It’s enough that only a few people and Hashem know about this accomplishment.) You can just imagine the effect it has on a student!

The Rebbe directed his words to the schools as well as the parents: Make sure to show the child that your true *nachas* comes from their accomplishments in *limudei kodesh*.

## STAFFING PRIORITIES

Another area the Rebbe pointed to was staffing priorities. He decried the fact that many schools put a higher priority on their secular teachers than their *limudei kodesh* teachers, paying them more and on time, and accommodating their requests more readily.

In a warped way, this makes sense, the Rebbe explained.<sup>22</sup> The school knows that the *limudei kodesh* teacher would never quit due to lack of payment: “Being that he’s a *frummer Yid*, he will certainly not leave his job because of the mitzvah of ‘teaching your children’... He is obligated to teach because of Hashem’s commandment, we’re doing him a favor by paying him. Thus, he takes whatever he is given, and whenever it comes... Whereas the secular teacher is not fulfilling a mitzvah, and if he’s not paid he’ll go look for a job somewhere else.”

However you want to explain it, the children see one thing: The secular teachers are being paid twice or three times as much as the religious teachers. Not only that, but the religious teachers need to run after their checks; and even then—they receive head checks for a few months later, until they get another head check... The children will find out this information, and they will come to a simple conclusion: secular studies are more important!

(During this farbrengen, the Rebbe established a lending-fund to advance money to teachers that had been given head checks from the school.)<sup>23</sup>

This inappropriate attitude expressed itself in other ways as well. The heads of schools promote their secular programs, the physical textbooks and classrooms are higher quality, and even the donors are expected to give less for the *limudei kodesh*. “When it comes to a building for secular studies they find someone to give a quarter-of-a-million dollars, another person to give a million, a million and a half, two and a half million; they can even find a big donor if they teach *limudei kodesh*—as long as the focus is on *limudei chol*. But when it comes to a building for purely *limudei kodesh*, then even “*chai*” dollars is considered a large donation...”<sup>24</sup>

At the very least, the Rebbe said, there must be equality between the secular and religious subjects.

## LIMUDEI KODESH IN THE MORNING

One major point of emphasis by the Rabbeim was that the *limudei kodesh* must be in the morning, for all classes. As they quoted, ראשית עריסותיכם תרימו תרומה, “לה” —the first and the best part of the day—when the student’s mind is fresh—must be dedicated to studying Hashem’s Torah. The legally mandated secular studies should be in the afternoon when the child is tired.

(Although the Rebbe did not spell it out clearly, it is obvious why this was such an issue: it can be difficult and costly to arrange. When the schedule is flexible, the school can arrange that the teachers for *limudei kodesh* and *lehavdil limudei chol* switch off between classes, so that they are working the entire day. When all *limudei kodesh* is in the morning and all *limudei chol* are in the afternoon, the school often needs to employ double the amount of teachers.)

But the Rabbeim considered it to be a fundamentally important issue. In 5702\*, the board of education of New York wanted to coerce the Jewish schools and yeshivos to have their *limudei chol* in the morning. The Frierdiker Rebbe came out forcefully against this effort, decrying it as a horrible *gezeira* against Yiddishkeit, desecrating the holiness of Torah. “It must be explained clearly... that putting *limudei chol*—*lehavdil*—before *limudei kodesh*, cannot be done; they must know that they are desecrating the religious feelings of our nation.”<sup>25</sup>

In several stirring letters from the time, we see a glimpse of the Frierdiker Rebbe’s work in this area, as he lays out plans of action to deal with the government and to raise awareness in the Jewish community, emphasizing that no compromise was on the table.<sup>26</sup> “All Yidden, no matter their affiliation, must join in demanding that this horrible decree be nullified,”<sup>27</sup> he writes.

The Rebbe also took a strong stand on this issue, speaking about it in several *sichos* and corresponding about it to heads of schools.

One (unnamed) school wrote to the Rebbe that they wanted to begin having *limudei chol* in the morning for certain classes. After reminding them that *limudei chol* is in yeshivos only for legal reasons, and that one should never go further down the path of *strengthening* the *limudei chol* program, the Rebbe added:

“In order to make it easier for you, so that you can convince yourself and your supporters, consider this: For about 10 years, you have stood strong in this issue, and notwithstanding all the challenges and difficulties and costs associated with it, you prevailed that *limudei kodesh* should come first. Now, we all believe and hope every single day that Moshiach Tzidkeinu will come and take us out of our physical and spiritual *galus*, so imagine to yourself that you made this change—that after 10 years of standing strong, you gave in at the very last moment; when you and your students go out of *galus*, your institution will be counted among those who begin

## WHAT IF IT’S IMPOSSIBLE?

Rabbi Berel Gurevitch, director of the Beis Rivkah of France, seemed to be experiencing serious obstacles in having *limudei kodesh* in the morning. The Rebbe writes to him that if it is completely impossible to arrange that *limudei kodesh* is studied the entire morning, one can compromise *bedochak* if the day begins with one class in *limudei kodesh*. Thus, the first part of the day is dedicated to Hashem—ראשית עריסותיכם תרימו תרומה—לה—although really *all* the morning hours should be dedicated to *limudei kodesh*.

(The Rebbe concludes by advising Rabbi Gurevitch to find another way around the problem. “Find other people to influence this person, so that she agrees to continue as it was.”)



# PURITY OF THE MIND

the day with ABC, and then only afterwards do they have—*lehavdil*—Alef, referring to Hashem (*aluf shel olam*)...<sup>28</sup>

## WE MUST BE MOSER NEFESH!

Raising the standards of our children's *chinuch* is a critical priority, for which we must be *moser nefesh*, as the Rebbe said in a powerful *sicha* on Yud Shevat 5737\*:

*Due to the laws of this country and others, a horrible situation has come to be: Children cannot go through a school-day without studying limudei chol. This begins from the age of five (when they begin Chumash) and continues through the ages of 10 (when he begins Mishnah), 13 (when he becomes bar mitzvah) and 15 (when he studies Gemara).*

*We must take a lesson from the [Friediker Rebbe], the baal hahilula: He literally risked his life, and sent others to risk their lives, to establish chadarim for Jewish children, where they would study **al taharas hakodesh**, only limudei kodesh, without changing any of the educational standards that Yidden have used throughout the generations.*

*How much more so in our days, and in our country—where there is no physical danger, chas veshalom: The greatest effort must be invested that the children's education should be purely limudei kodesh, without any limudei chol, except when the law gives no leeway at all, and only to that extent.*

*...I am certain that with a bit of effort and focus, one can immediately minimize the amount of time that Jewish children spend on limudei chol, and dedicate much more*

## YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT

Notwithstanding the nuance in the Rebbe's approach to *limudei chol*—he even gave several oral directives to shlichim about *limudei chol* in their schools, as above—we find several letters to yeshivos and schools where the Rebbe demands and encourages them to bring up their standards—and certainly not drop them.

“Regarding *limudei chol* in your yeshiva,” the Rebbe writes to Reb Folle Kahn, “this is an area where one needn't be scrupulous—it is, in fact, wrong to be scrupulous... It's come the time to be more ambitious in this regard. You should be the leaders in this area, for 'Hashem is with us' and there's nothing to be afraid of... especially in such a thing, that the Rabbeim considered to be a fundamental priority, וד"ל.”<sup>30</sup>

To another head of school: “The tremendous amount of time spent on *limudei chol* and exercise on the account of *limudei kodesh* time—is horrifying. *Hagam lichbosh es hamalka imi babayis?*!”<sup>31</sup>

To the administration of Tomchei Temimim of Lod the Rebbe writes, “You write about changing the curriculum of Tomchei Temimim and putting *limudei chol* into it, even for a few special classes. I don't know what the *breitkeit* is... to change the study curriculum of Tomchei Temimim established for so many years.”<sup>32</sup>

time—in quality and quantity—to limudei kodesh. If ones make the decision knowing that it is a necessity—for that is how the Alter Rebbe paskens in the laws of Talmud Torah—then he will certainly succeed.<sup>29</sup> **T**

1. Igros Kodesh Maharayatz letter 1,427.
2. Toras Menachem 5742 vol. 3 p. 1837-1838.
3. Toras Menachem vol. 27 p. 103.
4. Toras Menachem vol. 15 p. 73-74.
5. Igros Kodesh vol. 11 p. 403.
6. Igros Kodesh vol. 10 p. 43-44.
7. Igros Kodesh vol. 14 p. 43.
8. Igros Kodesh vol. 10 p. 293
9. Ibid. vol. 8 p. 24
10. Toras Menachem vol. 13 p. 73-76.
11. Toras Menachem vol. 27 p. 105.
12. Igros Kodesh vol. 20 p. 120.
13. Igros Kodesh vol. 10 p. 297.
14. Toras Menachem vol. 19, p. 116.
15. Igros Kodesh vol. 12 p. 452-453
16. Toras Menachem 5742 vol. 3 p. 1838; 5747 vol. p. 521
17. Likkutei Sichos vol. 16 p. 145.
18. Igros Kodesh vol. 22 p. 221-222.
19. Toras Menachem vol. 16 p. 143
20. Toras Menachem vol. 33 p. 226-234.
21. It should be noted that in a letter to the Rebbe (in 5737), Rabbi Shmuel Lew wrote that he had heard that the Rebbe was against allowing students to study Shakespere. However, he wrote, in England it is mandatory for all ages to study Shakespere, and he asked how to proceed in the Lubavitch schools in London. The Rebbe replied that he wasn't responsible for these rumors, and that obviously if it was mandatory, it should be done. See Igros Kodesh vol. 32 p. 94.
22. Toras Menachem vol 40. p. 321-326.
23. Ibid.
24. Toras Menachem vol. 33 p. 189.
25. Igros Kodesh Rebbe Rayatz 1,427.
26. See Igros Kodesh Rebbe Rayatz 1,428; 1,431-32, and in the footnotes there.
27. Ibid. 1,427.
28. Igros Kodesh vol. 6 1,635.
29. Likkutei Sichos vol. 16 p. 145-146.
30. Igros Kodesh vol. 6 p. 119.
31. Igros Kodesh vol. 7 p. 237.
32. Igros Kodesh vol. 11 p. 249-250.
33. Igros Kodesh, letter 1,810.

## DON'T WASTE THE TIME

At times, the Rebbe encouraged people to pull their children out of the secular program of the school, with one condition—that the time be filled with *limudei kodesh*. In one fascinating exchange, the Rebbe addresses a couple, where the husband wanted the child to study only *limudei kodesh*.

To the wife, the Rebbe writes: *Speak to [your husband] and I said **many times** that wasting time is worse than anything else, and it damages the hours spent studying as well. It is therefore necessary to arrange (together with other parents) a schedule of learning that will fill **all** spare time (like Oholei Torah, etc). If you do not wish to do so, for whatever reason—the children should be enrolled in the regular yeshiva schedule.*

To the husband, the Rebbe writes: *I already answered **clearly**: Wasting time is out of the question. If his time will be **filled** with limudei kodesh (so that his schedule is no shorter than the other students)—then there is no point in limudei chol.*

The Rebbe writes a similar point to the administration of Tomchei Temimim Montreal: You will certainly arrange that the students who—appropriately—are not studying *limudei chol*, will not do nothing during that time; they should be busy learning other subjects or reviewing their studies. The main thing is to have supervision so that they don't waste their time.<sup>33</sup>



# דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

לזכות  
הרה"ת ר' גד דוד ומרת שירה

וילדיהם  
נתנאל חיים, נחמה אסתר, חוה מזל,  
מנחם מענדל, נעמי חנה,  
משה אליהו שיחיו  
סבג



## Landing in our Makom Hashlichus

AS TOLD BY RABBI YITZCHOK SCHMUKLER (CLEAR LAKE AREA, TX)

In the summer of 5763 my wife and I started serving as shlichim in Houston, Texas working in an established *mosad*. Eight years later we were offered the opportunity to open a new Chabad House in Clear Lake Area, an area southeast of Houston. It was a big decision for us. We would be starting from scratch and we had many questions.

Gimmel Tammuz that year was on Tuesday and before traveling to New York my wife and I decided that at the Ohel I would ask the Rebbe for clear guidance whether we

should move forward to this new place, starting a new page in our shlichus.

In my letter I specifically asked the Rebbe that we merit to be shown in a clear way what the proper path forward was for us.

On Wednesday, 4 Tammuz, I was on a Continental Airlines flight to Houston deep in conversation with a fellow passenger and suddenly I heard an announcement from the pilot over the intercom.





“Ladies and Gentlemen, I’m sure you’ve noticed that we have been in a holding pattern for a while. Due to a rainstorm, the Bush International Airport is closed to incoming flights and we tried to wait it out in the air. We are low on fuel so I will land the plane in the nearest airport in order to refuel and hopefully when the weather clears up we will fly over to Bush Airport. We are now heading to Ellington Airfield in Clear Lake.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. We were landing in Clear Lake!

In order to appreciate the uniqueness of landing the plane in Ellington Field you must realize that Clear Lake is a suburban area where the NASA Mission Control is located and the airfield is used for special NASA projects, military flights and some private civilian planes. Commercial airliners never land there, especially not large jets. Besides, there is another airport in the Houston area called Hobby Airport which is actually very close to Ellington Field. Nevertheless, our pilot decided to specifically land in Ellington Field.

As we were banking to land, I excitedly peered towards the window and asked the passenger in the window seat to allow me a better view of the neighborhood I was considering moving to very soon.

After we landed my wife called me.

“Hi Yitzchok. You landed? How was your flight?”

“My flight was wonderful, *baruch Hashem*, but I didn’t land in Houston.”

“You didn’t land in Houston?! So where are you?”

“I’m in Clear Lake.” I told her briefly what happened and hung up the phone.

Thirty seconds later she called me back.

“Yitzchok, are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“Absolutely!”

We had our clear answer from the Rebbe.

What makes this episode so extraordinary is the fact that that year there was a record breaking drought in Texas. There was hardly any rain that year and the rain storm and high winds on Wednesday, 4 Tammuz 5771 swept through the Houston area from 3:15 p.m. through 4:11 p.m. closing the airport for just that hour. My flight was scheduled to land at 4:06...

Confident with the Rebbe’s clear direction and *brachos*, we notified the head shliach that we were ready to establish Chabad in Clear Lake Area. After a year of preparations and *peulos* we moved to Clear Lake Area and have merited to see wonderful *hatzlacha* ever since.

Although my story seems unique I know that this emphasizes that wherever shluchim are today they were sent there directly by the Rebbe. **1**

## YOUR STORY

Share your story with A Chassidisher Derher by emailing [stories@derher.org](mailto:stories@derher.org).



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 209/64

לזכר נשמת  
שיינא גאלדא ע"ה  
בת יבלחט"א ר' מיכאל הלוי שיחי'  
גוטלייזער  
גלב"ע כ"ח אלול ה'תשע"ו  
ת"נ צ"ב ה'  
נדפס ע"י זקניה  
הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר וזוגתו מרת לאה  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
שפאלטר



# WELCOME HOME

RALLY WITH CAMPERS -  
14 ELUL 5740\*

On 14 Elul 5740\* the Rebbe joined the children returning home from Camp Gan Yisroel and Camp Emunah for Mincha in the main shul, followed by a rally.



The Rebbe davens Mincha.



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 188226



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 188227



LEVI FREDIN VIA JEM 188227



Mincha was followed by the sounding  
of the shofar and the Twelve Pesukim.



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 188238





LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 188246



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 188246

The Rebbe watches as a representative from each camp gives a speech. Rabbi Alter Metzger, the rabbi of Camp Emunah, spoke of the *mesiras nefesh* of the Rabbeim for their Torah. When he mentioned the Rebbe's tremendous *peulos* around the world and how much the Rebbe put into his Torah etc., the Rebbe waved his hand, seemingly in a gesture dismissing his words.

The Rebbe addressed the children about the importance of the month of Elul as well as the upcoming year of Hakhel, stressing that children's gatherings should be arranged at least three times; before Rosh Hashanah, during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, and on Chol Hamoed Sukkos.

Additionally, the Rebbe asked that the children should repeat the *pesukim* of Shema Yisroel and Torah Tziva once more.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 168383





LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 190852





LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 188287

The Rebbe distributed coins to the head counselors and directors of the camps. Every child received two dimes; one for tzedakah and the other to do with as they wish. As the distribution begins, the Rebbe asks Rabbi Hecht to announce once more what each child is to do with their coins.



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 188292



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 188289



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 209163









While leaving the shul, the Rebbe instructs that “*Ufaratzta*” be sung.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 209162

# Derher**Letters**

A forum for readers to send their feedback, add to, or ask any questions about articles. Submit your letter to [feedback@derher.org](mailto:feedback@derher.org).

Submissions may be slightly modified by our editorial staff before publishing.



## Call to Action

Dear Editors,

I just read the article about bringing Yidden to the Rebbe [“Neshamos Connect”, Issue 95 (172), Tammuz 5780], which is a very *geshmake* article and the newly published pictures from 5718\* are very special as well.

I just want to mention an important point. After my grandfather Reb Berel Shemtov brought that group to the Rebbe, the Rebbe sent him a letter (which was also a draft for future trips like this one) encouraging him to make sure there would be an outcome from the trip, and the Rebbe wrote a fascinating point: Because you know how important the Rebbe’s *farbrengen* is, it is crucial to make sure that it does not go to waste. This is through bringing it to action in Torah and mitzvos as an outcome of the inspiration from the *farbrengen*!

Zelig Shemtov,  
West Bloomfield, MI

”

## Seder Hadoros

Dear Editors,

Thank you very much for the wonderful monthly publication full of *chassidishe tochen*.

I would like to point out a correction. In the Sivan Derher, in the article about the Rebbe’s *biurim* on Pirkei Avos [“*Touching the Depth*”, Issue 94 (171)], it was written: “The first *pirush*, Avos D’rabi Nosson, was compiled by a Tanna, and this was followed by *pirushim* by some of the greatest Rishonim (Rambam, Rashi) and

early Acharonim (Tosfos Yom Tov, Bartenura, Maharal, etc.).”

In the next paragraph you write: “Therefore we find that Rashi and Rambam (Rishonim) contradict the Avos D’rabi Nosson; the Bartenura and Tosfos Yom Tov (early Acharonim) contradict the Rishonim; and the same is true of the later Acharonim like the Maharal and so on.”

Reading the beginning of this article, one might think that the Rambam was before Rashi, and from both paragraphs it seems that the Tosfos Yom Tov was before the Maharal. However the truth is that the Rambam was born around 30 years after Rashi’s passing and the Tosfos Yom Tov was the Maharal’s *talmid*, as the Tzemach Tzedek writes in Derech Mitzvosecha (Haamonas Elokus p. 47): “הנה הגאון המקובל ר”ה הודה ליואי ב”ר בצלאל מפראג רבו של התויו”ט”.

Chaim Wilhelm  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

”

## Never Push it Off

Dear Editors,

Thank you for the article about bringing Yidden to the Rebbe in the Tammuz magazine [“Neshamos Connect”, Issue 95 (172)].

I had the special *zechus* to bring a large group of Yidden from Pittsburgh to 770 to spend Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel 5752\* with the Rebbe. This was the last Shabbos that the world merited to a *farbrengen* from the Rebbe.

That year at the Kinus Hashluchim, there was a big *hisorerus* among the shluchim to bring Yidden to dollars and to 770 in general. Many

shluchim took on *hachlatos* to bring groups for various Shabbosim throughout the next year. We chose Shabbos Vayakhel as the week that we would bring a group from Pittsburgh to the Rebbe.

The winter flew by and Vayakhel was just a few weeks away when Rabbis Deren, Rosenblum, Munitz and I realized that we were behind and that we still had a lot of work to do in advertising the trip and encouraging people to join. Some of the other shluchim involved suggested that we push it off a week and come for Shabbos Pekudei instead, but I insisted that we stick to our plans, "One doesn't push off a trip to the Rebbe."

I had heard from my father-in-law, Reb Berel Junik a"h that when he was a *bochur* in Brunoy in 5710\*, he and a few of the other Russian *bochurim* finally got their papers and were ready to move on to New York to be by the Frierdiker Rebbe. They scheduled their trip and were set to arrive in New York at the beginning of Shevat. At that time, word got out that Reb Berel's father, Reb Naftali a"h would be coming to the area in the next few weeks. Reb Berel hadn't seen his father in 4 years since he had escaped from Russia and some people suggested that he delay his trip to New York by a few days so that he would have the opportunity to see his father after so long. When he asked the *mashpia* Reb Nissan Nemanov a"h what he should do, Reb Nissan told him that "one doesn't push off a trip to the Rebbe." Indeed, my father-in-law departed to New York as planned and merited to have one of the last *yechidusen* with the Frierdiker Rebbe in the week prior to the *histalkus* on Yud Shevat.

So over the next few weeks we made a large *shturem* in Pittsburgh about the trip and arranged a full program for Shabbos with speakers, etc. to keep the people entertained. We were able to arrange four charter buses full of people, including *anash*, *yeshiva bochurim*, recent Russian immigrants and regular *baalei batim* from Pittsburgh. Many people joined us in cars as well.

The plan was that we would all meet and go for dollars in the early afternoon on Sunday, come together for a lavish lunch and then the buses

would leave back at a normal hour so that people would be able to be at work on Monday

Shabbos was very organized and everyone had great pleasure davening with the Rebbe and being at the *farbrengen*. At the *farbrengen* I went up to receive a bottle of *mashke* from the Rebbe on behalf of the group.

Then came Sunday, 26 Adar, and unfortunately things didn't work out exactly as we had planned. We had originally received permission from the *vaad hamesader* to go in all together for dollars through the main entrance of 770, which would have allowed us to skip the long lines through the hallway and down the stairs, etc., but then they changed their decision and we had to get everyone in a different way. Mrs. Rosenblum from Pittsburgh is a cousin of Reb Itche Shpringer a"h who had a key to the *zal* and she begged him to let us in that way instead. Of course, all this delayed everything a lot.

At dollars, I stood on the side and watched as numerous members of our group received *brachos* from the Rebbe for children, *shidduchim* and other things (these people merited to see great *yeshuos* in the following period). I was the last member of the group to receive a dollar and the Rebbe nodded to me which I felt was an acknowledgment for the effort I had put into bringing the group.

By the time we had all passed by the Rebbe, it was already after 6:00 p.m. Supper was not organized properly and some of the people were frustrated to be departing home so late without having eaten properly.

One can only imagine how we all felt the following evening when we gathered together in shul to say Tehillim after hearing the terrible news about what happened to the Rebbe on 27 Adar. For months and years afterwards, people came to thank me for having had the opportunity to be by the Rebbe for that special Shabbos and dollars.

The lesson of the story is that we should always look for opportunities to bring Yidden to the Rebbe and never push it off.

**Yosef Yitzchok Itkin**  
Pittsburgh, PA