

# MY CHERISHED SON

*The following story was related by Rabbi Ze'ev Kaplan, the director of the Talmud Torah in Nachlas Har Chabad, in an interview with A Chassidisher Derher:*



We came to 770 for a year of *Kevutzah\** in 5747. During this time period, the middle of the 5740's, Lubavitch grew exponentially from the early days of the Rebbe's *nesius*. There were hundreds of shluchim around the world. Thousands of Chassidim crowded 770 every year for Tishrei and the Yomim Tovim. In addition, because of the great influx of people, private *yechidus* had already ended. Due to these reasons, it was easy for me to feel as if the special connection the Rebbe had with each individual had been lost in the crowd.

As a young bochur I found it much harder to connect with the Rebbe on a personal level when passing by the Rebbe for dollars or Kos Shel Brocha. The elder Chassidim in 770 spoke of the special individual attention the Rebbe showered on them, and shared the many personal stories that they merited to experience

as bochurim with the Rebbe. Listening enviously to the Chassidim, I, along with some of my fellow bochurim, sometimes felt irrationally, *"Is it possible that today the Rebbe could know us as well as the bochurim in the early years? Chabad is so big now, and there are thousands of people crowded in 770 all the time. Can it be that the Rebbe notices all the young bochurim at davening and farbrengens?"* The *mashpi'im* at 770 assured us that without question the Rebbe recognizes each and every person. Not only does the Rebbe know each person, they explained, but the Rebbe cares about every bochur's personal life, situation, concerns, and progress.

Fast-forward twenty-four years. I was sitting in the tent at the Ohel, reflecting on my current situation. I was facing a major crossroad in my life, and the decision I made would have irreversible



effects. As these thoughts raced through my mind, I wrote down the different options I was faced with. Deviating from my usual practice, I added a line to my *pan*: I would like to receive a sign from the Rebbe that whatever decision is made, the Rebbe will be with me, supporting me.

I left the Ohel and traveled directly to 770 to daven mincha. While in the Zal, I met Rabbi Chaim Shaul Brook. “I’m so happy I bumped into you, I’ve been looking for you!”, exclaimed Rabbi Brook. Asking for my email, Rabbi Brook continued, “I found something important for you.”

Rabbi Chaim Shaul Brook, the director of Va’ad Hanachos B’Lahak, continuously looks for *kisvei*

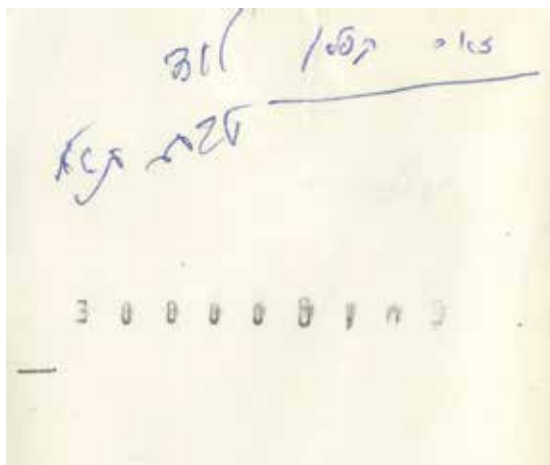
*yad*, originals of the Rebbe’s writings and notes on farbrengens and sichos that were not published and forgotten. A few years ago Rabbi Brook began to sift through the Rebbe’s library. Rabbi Brook hoped that between the many seforim he would find some “*hanachos*”, that for various reasons had never been printed. In fact, between the shelves and shelves of seforim, many sichos with the Rebbe’s

corrections were found and finally published. Among these sichos, Rabbi Brook also found many other items.

When I opened my email later on, I found myself looking at a picture of myself as a young child in Lod. My father had sent this picture to the Rebbe in the year 5740. My father had written above the picture “Zeev Kaplan,” and the Rebbe had added in his holy handwriting “לוד טבת תש”מ”. Rabbi Brook expounded in the email that the tear in the picture is a sign that the Rebbe had taken the picture to the Ohel, and had then brought it back to the library.

I trembled as I realized that more than 30 years ago, before I even knew of the existence of this photo, the Rebbe had already taken my picture to the Ohel and cherished it. Now, on the very day that I stood before the Rebbe at the Ohel and asked for a sign, *b’hashgacha pratit*, Rabbi Brook approached me with this amazing find. This was a clear indication to me of the great connection that the Rebbe has with each chossid; the feeling of concern and worry of a father.

This was a very strong lesson for me. As a bochur, I believed wholeheartedly that the Rebbe cared about my life and is concerned about my well-being. However, I did not merit any special stories or connections with the Rebbe. I never truly understood and related to the exceptionally unique relationship the Rebbe has with each and every chossid. Now, many years after *gimmel tammuz*, when we are unfortunately not *zoche* to see and hear the Rebbe, I felt the Rebbe telling me, “You are my Chassid; and I care about you, today and always.” **D**



RABBI ZE'EV KAPLAN AS A CHILD. THE REBBE ADDED “לוד טבת תש”מ”