

THE TIMELY LETTER

*As told by Rabbi Zalman Farkash, Mashpia in Yeshivah Gedola, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Prepared by Rabbi Mendel Kaminker and Rabbi Menachem Posner*



RABBI ZALMAN FARKASH

I want to tell you a story that I myself experienced on Sunday, 20 Sivan, 5775 (June 7th, 2015).

On the previous Thursday, I left my home in Buenos Aires to travel to Seattle, Washington where my niece was to be married. I took the opportunity to depart early and first fly to New York and spend some time at the Ohel.

A dear friend of mine by the name of Mendel Chaim gave me a ride to the airport. He is a cancer survivor. Baruch Hashem, he is alive and well. However

the terrible illness impaired his ability to father children.

As we navigated the teeming streets of Buenos Aires, Mendel Chaim told me that he and his wife were considering adoption. “We just don’t know how to proceed,” he said. “On one hand, we’d prefer to adopt a Jewish child. On the other hand, it’s not easy to find a Jewish baby in need of a home. We’re considering adopting a non-Jewish child, converting him or her as a baby, and then raising him or her as Jewish. We’ve spoken to many rabbonim and received a number of different answers, and we just don’t know what to do...”

Before I got out of the car, Chaim Mendel gave me his mother’s Hebrew name and asked that I daven for him and his wife at the Ohel. Of course I agreed.

On Friday, I arrived in New York with plans to remain there until Sunday evening when I’d catch my connecting flight to Seattle. I entered the Ohel on Friday and on Motzai Shabbos

and on both occasions I mentioned my friend and his situation.

On Sunday morning, I sat in the shul near the Ohel learning a maamor. As I studied, the room filled up and people began to daven shacharis. One of them was a middle-aged man who had come with a younger man. I observed that the older man was saying *kaddish yasom* at the appropriate places in the davening—nothing unusual for a man of that age.

Shacharis ended and I was still studying, completely engrossed in my *sefer*. Suddenly the man turned to me, dug his hand into the velvet tallis bag and pulled out a folded yellowing piece of paper.

“Here,” he said, “have a look at what it says here; I’m sure you’ll find it interesting.”

Not sure what else to do, I gingerly took the slip of paper, unfolded it, and began to read.

The page was a copy of a typed letter from the Rebbe dated 17 Iyar 5718 on the topic of . . . adoption!



In the letter, the Rebbe advises the man and his wife to seek out a child in need of a home from a large, impoverished Jewish family. The Rebbe also advised the prospective adoptive parents to increase in their mitzvah observance in advance of the new addition to their family.¹

I was shocked. I asked the man if I could perhaps snap a picture with my phone, but he refused. When I told him about the conversation I had with my friend on the way to the airport, he agreed on the condition that I would not photograph the family name written on the top of the letter.

He then told me the story of the letter:

“The Rebbe sent this letter to my father. My parents had been without children for many years and wanted to adopt. Unsure of what to do, my father turned to the renowned *posek* Rabbi Moshe Feinstein who suggested that he write to the Rebbe for advice.

“The Rebbe advised my parents to look for a Jewish child in need of a home, and I am that child. My father passed away almost a year ago, and today is the last day that I am saying kaddish for him.

“I’m not sure why,” he concluded, “but after I said the final kaddish, I felt a strong urge to show you this letter.”

The Rebbe had found his way to answer Mendel Chaim and his wife. **D**

1. The Rebbe’s view on adoption is nuanced and multifaceted. The different answers the Rebbe gave in this regard vary depending on the situation. It’s important to bear in mind that the Rebbe said, that an answer to one is not necessarily applicable to another. See also *Shulchan Menachem* vol. 6 p. 38.



THE PICTURE RABBI FARKASH TOOK OF THE REBBE’S LETTER CONTAINING ADVICE CONCERNING THE ADOPTION OF A JEWISH CHILD.



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