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Fohrt Gezunterhayt!

RECEIVING THE REBBE'S FAREWELL BRACHA

When the time came for a young boy's bar mitzvah, perhaps the first thing he would do was write about it to the Rebbe, asking for his *brachos* for life ahead. When several years later the same person would get married, then too, he would request the Rebbe's approval and *brachos*. At every important junction in life, chassidim look towards the Rebbe for direction and guidance. Many would consult before purchasing a home, upon embarking on a new business undertaking, and just about everything in between.

It should come as no surprise then, that before setting out on a journey, whether home-bound or otherwise, chassidim would seek the Rebbe's wishes for safe travels and success in their endeavors.

When the occasion presented itself, people took the opportunity of a *yechidus* to convey to the Rebbe plans of their imminent departure and receive thereby a *bracha*; whilst others did so via written correspondence.

Many however, chose to approach the Rebbe on his way in or out of the *tefillos*.

In the earlier years, when the Rebbe joined the *minyán* upstairs, people stood in the foyer at the entrance to 770. Later, when the Rebbe would daven in the large shul, a path was generally formed for the Rebbe to walk through from the shul's back door to the Rebbe's *bima* at the opposite end of the hall. Many chose to stand at the very end of the *shvil* (near the back door, see photo), and approach the Rebbe there. Women requesting the Rebbe's *bracha* stood upstairs in the foyer.

Having spoken to one of the Rebbe's *mazkirim* beforehand (usually Rabbi Leibel Groner), they would wait when the Rebbe was close enough, and the *mazkir* would tell the Rebbe about the individual's upcoming travels. The Rebbe would then wish the person, "*Fohrt gezunterhayt*"—travel in good health. On occasion the Rebbe would inquire whether the person had received a dollar (at the most recent distribution), or a *maane* that the Rebbe had wanted transmitted to him or her.



A STORY

Short as they may have been, these brief moments were sometimes life changers. In an interview with the "My Encounter With The Rebbe" team, Rabbi Avraham Leizeron¹, then chairman of *Chinuch Atzmai* in Eretz Yisroel, related how he had visited the U.S. to meet with several prominent rabbis. He intended on davening *mincha* in 770, and to request the Rebbe's *brachos* before setting out to the airport to return to Eretz Yisroel.

Shortly beforehand, he was in Manhattan in the offices of Agudas Yisroel, and as he was making his way out, looking to go to 770, he was approached by an individual that had business in the area, and knew Rabbi Leizeron's father, who was a big *talmid chacham*.

The two engaged in discussion, and the man suddenly told the visiting rabbi: "What are you doing in public activism? Why are you wasting your time?! Listen to me, I am a wealthy man; open up a *kolel*, devote yourself entirely to Torah as your father had, and I will support the *kolel* for a number of years."

Rabbi Leizeron, who needed no convincing about how strenuous and challenging life as an *askan* was, felt confused. He hadn't elicited advice from the man, nor did he plan on abandoning his work, but the offer was enticing. Throughout his taxi ride to Crown Heights his mind swirled with thoughts and doubts. 'Perhaps he's right,' Rabbi Leizeron thought. 'People don't even appreciate all



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With the precious response from the Rebbe, chassidim confidently set off on their journey. It is almost superfluous to state that chassidim regarded this *bracha* from the Rebbe with great seriousness; it often served as an indication of the fate of their trip. There were occasions when people that had long since planned a voyage, tickets in hand and ready to set off, either cancelled or postponed their plans, when the Rebbe's wishes were not forthcoming.

the efforts that communal activists invest in their work; what could be higher than unhindered continuous Torah study?’

When he arrived to 770, *mincha* was already underway, and these questions gave him no rest. After davening he went to stand near the Rebbe’s room, hoping to receive a *bracha*. When the Rebbe arrived, Rabbi Groner mentioned to the Rebbe who this man was, to which the Rebbe responded by saying he knew Rabbi Leizeron. In what seemed a common interaction, the rabbi explained he was soon returning to Eretz Yisroel, and was requesting the Rebbe’s *bracha*, which the Rebbe immediately granted, along with wishes for success. The Rebbe then continued walking to his room.

Suddenly, standing on the threshold of the room, the Rebbe turned around and walked back to Rabbi Leizeron—who had made no mention whatsoever of his conversation with the man in Manhattan, and his consequent doubts—and said (in Yiddish): “There’s an opinion in *halacha* that an *osek betzorchei tzibur be’emunah* stands higher than one who studies Torah. Safe trip and much success!”

Rabbi Leizeron was left dumbfounded! While he admits he had wanted to discuss the matter with the Rebbe, he knew that the circumstances didn’t allow for such a thing, yet the Rebbe answered the question that had remained unasked! **T**

1. Disc 100, Program 398.



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