



A SURPRISE FARBRENGEN... A WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOUR

כ"ף טבת, תשמ"ה

INTRODUCTION

The timing of the Rebbe's farbrengens was usually quite predictable; there were days throughout the year on which Chassidim could expect a farbrengen. However, Chof Teves—the *yahrtzeit* of the Rambam (and the focus of this *yoman*)—was not a date that farbrengens were usually held. But in 5745 that date was just several months since the Rebbe launched *Mivtza Rambam*¹. It was in this spirit that the Rebbe called a surprise farbrengen. Adding to the surprise was the fact that almost all farbrengens were held at 9:30 pm, after *seder hayeshiva* had ended. But on this occasion the Rebbe called the farbrengen almost immediately after returning from the Ohel, with just a few minutes notice.

A WELCOME SURPRISE

On Sunday, Chof Teves, the Rebbe went to the Ohel; upon returning, he davened *mincha* and *maariv* with the *minyán*. During *chazzaras hashatz* of *mincha*, the Rebbe was seen glancing at the *parsha* printed in the back of the *siddur*. After *maariv* the Rebbe left to his room, and almost immediately afterwards, Rabbi Leibel Groner came out and announced—to everyone's surprise—that a farbrengen would begin in five minutes!

This was completely unexpected, and needless to say, everyone was ecstatic. There was a massive rush, as the shul was quickly prepared for this special farbrengen.

With everyone's help and participation, the room was set up within just a few minutes, and the

relatively small crowd stood waiting for the Rebbe to enter. Although the Rebbe's chair was set up as usual, due to the surprise nature of this farbrengen, there wasn't enough time to bring the regular cake. Reb Berel Junik brought a plate of cookies to serve as the "mezonos" instead, and placed it on the table near the Rebbe's place.

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YAHRTZEIT OF THE RAMBAM

When the Rebbe entered and began the farbrengen, he emphasized that the farbrengen was taking place on the Rambam's *yahrtzeit*.

"It carries extra significance in light of the recent drive in learning three daily *perakim* of the Mishneh Torah of the Rambam."

The Rebbe then asked with a smile how a farbrengen celebrating the Rambam could be held unannounced. Wasn't it after all the Rambam who wrote his works with the purpose of making a *seder* in Torah? It must be, said the Rebbe, that the value of order is highlighted even more when one allows for the occasional unexpected event!

"When something takes place with a sense of urgency and is still done in an orderly fashion, the *seder* is more recognizable. Indeed, this is an idea that holds especially true with regards to accepting new *hachlatos* upon ourselves."

After this short introduction, the Rebbe went on to discuss a *halacha* from the day's *shiur Rambam*. The Rambam states that "a *talmid* that is exiled to an 'ir *miklat*' should be accompanied by his teacher." This is because the Torah stipulates that when someone is exiled to an *ir miklat* he should "(flee to one of these cities of refuge and) live." Since a Torah scholar cannot properly 'live' without the Torah, he must bring his teacher along with him.

To practically apply this concept today, the Rebbe compared Hashem to the teacher, who accompanies his *talmid* into *golus*. Consequently, Hashem must ensure that every Jew has everything necessary to 'live,' and he must do so in an unqualified fashion. Most importantly, though, Hashem should immediately leave exile with each and every one of us—for good!

The Rebbe vigorously encouraged the singing in between the *sichos*, giving special attention to the famous basketball coach, Mr. Abe Sacks.² At one point, R' Sholom Ber Cadaner approached the Rebbe with a tray of fresh cake, and the Rebbe gave him a *yasher koach*.

A YID'S SUSTENANCE

In the third *sicha*, the Rebbe emphasized the importance of all talk to lead to practical action. "The mission of a Jew is to fulfil his *shlichus* in 'lighting up the world.' This is achieved specifically by following the path of Torah, which guides us in every aspect of our lives."

The Rebbe pushed this point further, using the famous parable of the 'fish in the water.' "Just like fish cannot live when they are removed from water,



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The police would close the road, psychologists would be brought to persuade him against his plans and they would even falsify facts until he is convinced.

a Yid that is removed from the Torah cannot truly live. If someone were, *chas v'sholom*, to insist that he doesn't care about Torah and mitzvos, he could be compared to a person on a bridge threatening to jump into the water to end his life. Any normal person would certainly do his utmost to stop him—even forcefully—from carrying out his plan. The police would close the road, psychologists would be brought to persuade him to change his mind, and they would even falsify facts until he is convinced. Throughout all this, the police would surely be working out a way to stop him—even forcefully, should it come to that. Nobody is going to convene a session in parliament to discuss what they should do according to the 'democratic law.'"

And so the Rebbe continued, "We must take the same approach when it comes to saving a Jew from depriving himself of his own spiritual life.

"You can find Jews who will argue that they see so many *goyim* living full and productive lives. After all, we all come from the same Adam Harishon, and we are all the same. If he can live like that, why shouldn't I be able to as well?"

The answer is very simple, said the Rebbe. "It is just like a fish comparing itself to a mammal. It is obvious that while an animal needs oxygen to survive, a fish must have water.

"Hashem designated each creation with its own necessities and individual abilities. A Yisroel can't do the job of a Kohen; a person's heart cannot control his limbs; and one minister can't fulfil the task of another. Hashem has likewise established separations and differences between us and the other nations. The only possible way to change this dynamic—for a *goy*—is through *giyur kehalacha*. Aside for this, according to the rules set in place by the Creator, there is no way for a *goy* to fulfil the task of a Yid."

And so, the Rebbe explained, the same is true vice versa.

"Someone that was born a Yid, or someone who converted to Yiddishkeit, will remain so eternally. Tonight being the *yom hilula* of the Rambam, the 'guide for the perplexed,' it is an appropriate occasion to set straight those who are confused about this issue. We should remind them that the



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single and only way for a Jew to properly live his life in a meaningful manner, is with Torah and its mitzvos.”

Following the *sichos*, the Rebbe asked that *Sheyiboneh* be sung, and as usual, he ended the farbrengen by distributing dollars to the *tankistin*. To one of the *tankistin* the Rebbe wished “פארט געזונטערהייט בשורות טובות”.

The farbrengen ended at 9:00 pm, which is earlier than a regular farbrengen would even begin!

As the Rebbe was leaving 770, he turned to the Junik brothers, who were waiting in *Gan Eden Hatachton*, and said: “גלאט אזוי א פארבריינגען... א גלייכע זאך —A surprise Farbrengen... a worthwhile endeavour.”

REGARDS FROM THE GERRER REBBE

When the Rebbe arrived at 770 on Monday morning, 21 Teves, Reb Nochum Kornwasser, the Gerer *rosh yeshiva*, approached and introduced himself. The Rebbe said to him, “Your name precedes you in matters of spreading Torah; may you have much *hatzlacha*.”

On the way to *krias haTorah*, the Rebbe gave a coin to someone who was flying that day to Eretz

Yisroel, saying, “*Chap arain* another tzedaka in *chutz la'aretz*.”

On his way out from *mincha* on Tuesday, 22 Teves, the Rebbe blessed a group of Gerrer chassidim present. The Gerrer Rebbe’s driver approached the Rebbe to convey his regards. The Rebbe thanked him and asked him his name. When he answered “Yehonoson Borenstein,” the Rebbe replied with a smile, “That’s your *goyishe* name. What’s your Yiddishe name?”

He answered with his mother’s name, and the Rebbe responded, “You need to give your mother’s name to the Gerrer Rebbe, not to me. I need your father’s name.”

After giving his full name, the Rebbe said, “Kol hamevorech misborech.” In reference to the regards from the Gerrer Rebbe, the Rebbe quoted the Gemara³, “The wine is the Master’s, yet thanks are given to the one who pours it.” **T**

1. Mivtza Rambam was launched on Acharon Shel Pesach 5744.
2. Abe was a Jewish basketball coach from Harlem who merited having exceptional *kiruvim* from the Rebbe. See Derher weekly newsletter vol. 1 issue 12 (Emor, 5771).
3. Bava Kame 92, 2.