



התוועדות חסידים

Hisvaadus—farbrengen—is one of the foundations of darkei hachassidim v'hachassidus. It is the opening and entryway to the mitzvah of ahavas Yisroel... (Hayom Yom 24 Tishrei)

**“דאס וואס עס קען אויפטאן א חסידישער
פארברענגען קען מלאך מיכאל ניט
אויפטאן...”**

Often described as the “mortar” holding together the many other staples of a Chossid’s life, for generations, a chassidisher farbrengen stood at the helm of *darkei haChassidus*. It serves as the driving force behind everyday *avodas Hashem*, breathing life into the study of *nigleh* and Chassidus, *avodas hatefillah*, and *ahavas Yisroel*; the bond connecting Chassidim with the Rebbe,¹ and Chassidim with one another.

The Frierdiker Rebbe describes the farbrengen as the “salt and pepper” providing flavor and *geshmak* in the Chossid’s *avodas Hashem*.²

Early Beginnings

Chassidishe farbrengens have been in existence as long as Chassidus itself. Perhaps the earliest recorded farbrengen in the form we have come to know it - speaking *divrei hisorerus*, saying *l'chaim* and singing *niggunim*, to strengthen those in attendance in Torah and mitzvos - is in the Frierdiker Rebbe’s “*lainge briv*”—the long letter written to Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka in 5695.³

The Frierdiker Rebbe describes the recollections of a young Simcha Zissel growing up in the city of Kalisk. He relates how a group of *yungeleit* returned to the city after being away for a few years, and they brought with them a new method in *avodas Hashem*. They were happy and upbeat. Their davening was with great passion, accompanied by sweet song and emotion.

Once, in the middle of the night, young Simcha Zissel observed a sight he could barely believe: The *yungeleit* brought out some potatoes they had baked on the stove, along with a bottle of bitter liquor and sat down with the elderly Reb Chaim and began to



TZEISCHEM L'SHOLOM FARBRENGEN IN THE SMALL ZAL OF 770 FOR RABBI SHMUEL LEW, UPON HIS DEPARTURE ON SHLICHUS TO LONDON. L-R: RABBI AVRAHAM ZISKIND, ROSH KOLLEL; RABBI SHMUEL LEW; RABBI MORDECHAI MENTLIK, ROSH YESHIVA OF 770. CIRCA AV 5725.

say L'chaim together. They kissed one another and then they broke out in a dance, singing and dancing for hours on end. Suddenly Reb Chaim sat down at the table and the group began speaking with one another in an undertone. Until Reb Chaim cried out in a tune and again joyous dancing erupted.

A short while later the secret got out: Reb Chaim himself was a *talmid* of the Baal Shem Tov, and he had sent the *yungeleit* to learn the ways of Chassidus.⁴

More than Mal'ach Michoel

Much has been said of the spiritual power of a chassidishe farbrengen. The Alter Rebbe explained it with a *mashal*: Children are by nature self-centered and don't necessarily like to share with others. A caring father will work with his children and hire an educator to set them on the right path. When seeing success in his effort and observing how his children learn to get along and care for one another, setting their own selves aside for the good of another, the father is filled with joy and pleasure. With that, he is compelled to fulfill their wishes and give in to their requests.

Similarly, when Chassidim sit together and bless one another at a farbrengen, Hashem is sure to fulfill their requests.

At one particular farbrengen, the Frierdiker Rebbe related, as the *talmidim* of Reb Mendel Horodoker sat together, one of them cried in agony of the troubles he endured and begged his peers to bless him with

salvation from his bitter predicament. At first the *talmidim* scoffed at him, thinking that they did not possess such spiritual power, but then the Alter Rebbe reminded them: "Did you forget about the note that fell down from heaven (פתקא אשר משמי שמיא) (נחיתא), stating that 'What a chassidishe farbrengen can accomplish, Mal'ach Michoel cannot achieve?'"

Hearing this vort from the Alter Rebbe, all the *talmidim* were aroused with the flame of *ahavas rei'im* and were ready to bless their colleague with a *refuah sheleima*.⁵

TWO FARBRENGENS

Shortly after the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived in America, he explained:

In recent times, the chassidishe farbrengen has taken on a new face.

It used to be that a chassidishe farbrengen was all about discussing the inner meaning of a *chassidisher* vort, or the lesson in *avodas Hashem* derived from a *chassidisher maaseh*. This uplifted Chassidim and placed them on a higher plane.

Nowadays, a farbrengen is all about strengthening Yiddishkeit; *taharas hamishpacha*, keeping Shabbos, setting fixed times to learn Torah, etc.

The latter is obviously very important. These subjects must be discussed and dealt with. But by no means should this take the place of the traditional, authentic *ruchniyus'dike*, chassidisher farbrengen...

(*Sefer Hasichos Summer 5700* p. 44)

Sorely Missed

Throughout the generations, the Rabbeim held the chassidisher farbrengen in the highest esteem and even spoke of how they wished they could have the *zechus* to partake in it.

The Rebbe Maharash once related to his son, the Rebbe Rashab:

"One receives the true *geshmak* in *yiras shomayim* and a true intellectual conviction ("אפלייג") of the concepts of Chassidus through a chassidisher farbrengen..."

"On Thursday, Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5619 (תר"ט), I went to my father [the Tzemach Tzedek] for *yechidus*. When I came into his room, I noticed he was in deep distress with a worrisome look on his holy face.

“At first, I was so taken aback that I was unable to speak, but then I calmed down and I asked my father what was the cause of this distress. I was sure it had something to do with the attempted decrees against the Jewish innkeepers in the region that my father had worked so hard combatting during the previous winter.

“But then my father explained:

“Today marks fifty years since the last chassidisher farbrengen in Liadi, which took place on Monday, Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5569 (תקס”ט).”

The Tzemach Tzedek went on to describe how on the preceding Shabbos, parshas Behar-Bechukosai, many distinguished guests arrived in Liadi. A beautiful farbrengen took place on that Motzoei Shabbos and the following Sunday, “Which I truly enjoyed,” the Tzemach Tzedek recalled.

The next day, Monday, Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan, the Alter Rebbe called the Tzemach Tzedek into his room. It was the Alter Rebbe’s custom each year before Rosh Chodesh Sivan to say a *maamar* privately for his grandson, and bless him. This year being the Tzemach Tzedek’s 20th year, the Alter Rebbe said the *maamar* “*Mi’ben Esrin*” and gave an extra blessing that he see success in his writing of *nigleh* and Chassidus.

“From then on,” the Tzemach Tzedek continued his story, “whenever I attended a farbrengen, I was treated differently; as the ‘Rebbe’s grandson.’ Later [after the Mittler Rebbe’s took over the *nesius*] I would be treated like the ‘Rebbe’s son-in-law,’ and then from the day I accepted the yoke of tending to *anash* [i.e. the *nesius*] thirty years ago, I have never properly enjoyed a chassidisher farbrengen.

“Contemplating on the unimaginable good I have missed out on over the past fifty years,” the Tzemach Tzedek concluded his story, “I am filled with a heart-wrenching pain from the depth of my heart...”

When the Rebbe Maharash concluded relating this story, he added:

“Imagine how much my father accomplished over those fifty years. He wrote scores of *chiddushim* in *nigleh* and elucidated and explained Chassidus. How many Yidden he invigorated throughout those thirty years of his *nesius*. How many holy visions he experienced.

“This holy man, the son of a holy man, and grandson of a holy man; a *gaon*, a *tzaddik*, close to



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seventy years of age, cries profusely from the depth of his heart over the fact that he cannot participate in a chassidisher farbrengen like an ordinary Chossid...”⁶

In his Rebbe’s Chamber

For Chassidim the farbrengen is an opportunity to strengthen their connection with the Rebbe and bring the memories of their time with the Rebbe to mind. In the darkest times of *galus*, when physical contact with the Rebbe was all but impossible, the farbrengen served as a glimmer of hope, rekindling the love to the Rebbe and reassuring themselves that they will see the Rebbe again. Chassidim in the Soviet Union often sang “אז דער אויבערשטער וועט געבן געזונט” און לעבן, וועלן מיר זיך זען מיט אונזער רבי’ן—expressing their certainty that they would once again be reunited with the Rebbe.⁷

In a letter, the Friediker Rebbe describes vividly what he expects the contents of a farbrengen to be, based on the true spirited farbrengens of Chassidim of olde:

“A truly serious atmosphere reigned over the participants of a farbrengen. One Chossid would relate the conduct he observed of his Rebbe, another would describe his Rebbe’s davening that he was privileged to hear at one point, a third would recount the words he heard from his Rebbe in *yechidus* that he is able to share with the public, while yet another would bring to mind the words he heard from the Rebbe that are not to be shared with anyone...

“In those moments, each of the participants in the farbrengen is transported from the time and place he stands to another place in time, many years prior, in his Rebbe’s chamber, looking at the Rebbe’s holy face with fear; while at the same time bearing a deep-felt pleasure, listening to every word of the *yechidus*.

“These are not mere memories of the participant at the farbrengen; he is living in them and reliving them. This experience expresses itself in the *nigun* that suddenly breaks out from the participant all together...”⁸

Hisvaaduyos Pe'ilos

Throughout the years, the Rebbe never missed an opportunity to encourage chassidishe farbrengens amongst *anash*. In the telegrams dispatched to all of *anash* before *yomim tovim* and *yomei d'pagra*, like Yud-Tes Kislev, Yud Shevat, Purim, and so on, the Rebbe almost always extends his *bracha* for “*Hisvaaduyos pe'ilos*”—successful and fruit-bearing farbrengens.

In *yechidus* with Reb Bentzion Shemtov in Sivan 5711, the Rebbe requested that he convey a message to all of *anash* in each community that he visits about the remaining *avoda* of our time, and then the Rebbe added:

“It is worthwhile to arrange chassidishe farbrengens in the spirit of love and unity, and with joy. With a farbrengen you can accomplish a lot more than one who sits and learns from a *sefer* on his own...”⁹

In countless letters, the Rebbe asks Chassidim to arrange more and more chassidisher farbrengens, and he thanks those who report about them.

In this letter to Reb Nissen Nemenov, the Rebbe expresses this point in exceptional terms:

“It is a pity that reporting such good news is delayed—good [news], meaning Torah and a chassidishe farbrengen; a doubled good, לבריית ולשמח... If such news was always appreciated, all the more so it is today, at the end-time before Moshiach.”¹⁰

The Rebbe was insistent that a farbrengen always bears fruit. In a letter to a Chossid in Eretz Yisroel who complained that he does not always see the positive outcome of his farbrengens, the Rebbe assured him that since, “At your farbrengens you certainly speak words of Torah and inspiration; it is therefore impossible that *divrei Elokim chayim* should not have their desired effect. It is well known that our holy Rabbeim taught that ‘the *neschama* hears’—even when the listener is a most simple person...”¹¹

After learning of a tragedy that had befallen a member of anash and his wife, the Rebbe writes:

During the farbrengen of the luminous day of Yud-Tes Kislev... I was notified of the incident ל"ע ול"ע, that occurred to you and your wife *sheyichyu*.

Being that the news was conveyed during an auspicious time (עת רצון)... when tens of Yidden were gathered together rejoicing in the celebration of *nessi Yisroel*, I am certain that your situation will only get better and better...

(Igros Kodesh vol. 12 p. 170)



CHASSIDIM WISH “L'CHAIM V'LIVROCHO” TO ONE ANOTHER DURING A FARBRENGEN CELEBRATING FORTY YEARS OF THE REBBE'S NESIUS, YUD SHEVAT, 5750.



JEV/THE LIVING ARCHIVE ID: 22173 יו"ת תשרי, 5738

RABBI SHLOMO AHARON KAZARNOVSKY (CENTER) AND RABBI SHMUEL DOVID RAICHIK LEAD A FARBRENGEN IN THE SMALL ZAL AT 770.

L'chaim

The Rabbeim offered a number of reasons for the custom of saying *l'chaim* at farbrengens:

Chazal say, גדולה לגיממה שמקרב—drink brings people together.¹²

Mashke is like *sota* water, cleansing the *nefesh*.¹³

Before *shechita*, water is given to the animal to smoothen the lung (or to thin-out the skin). Similarly, the *mashke* works to soften the *nefesh* and make her more *eidel*.¹⁴

Additionally, the Rebbe once explained the reason behind his distribution of bottles of *mashke* at farbrengens:

“Lately, we have been giving out bottles of *mashke* to those who are holding a *seuda* or a *melava malka*, as well as when we send out a shliach to perform *hafatzas hamaayanos*, so that he can make a farbrengen in the place of his shlichus... This

helps him achieve success in his shlichus: if he would merely come there and say *mussar*, perhaps no one would be interested. But when he makes a farbrengen, with food and drink, his words will have a better effect...

“I don’t give out vodka and I have no connection to vodka, *chas v’shalom*! When a shliach is going out to perform *hafatzas hamaayanos*, we give him *mashke*, which is connected to the Alter Rebbe’s saying about future times, when Moshiach comes and the world will be כולה משקה. We therefore give the shliach a bottle of *mashke* to assist in his activities of *hafatzas hamaayanos*.”¹⁵

Less is More

Nevertheless, the Rabbeim stressed that for achieving these goals, only a minimal amount of *mashke* is necessary.

The Friediker Rebbe often repeated the story of Chassidim who would sit through a whole night with *mashke* in their cups, and ultimately poured it back into the bottle when morning broke.¹⁶

Especially in our time, the Rebbe famously spoke over and over, often quite sharply, about not saying *lchaim* on more than four (or three) small cups.

The Rebbe explained that especially today, it is unnecessary and in fact harmful to say *lchaim* excessively.

In a letter to one of the elder Chassidim, the Rebbe articulates the reasons behind this idea:

- a. All the necessary *kochos* were already given to *anash* in the form of so many *maamarim* and *sichos*, which are easily understood. One can easily make an impression upon his listeners without lots of *mashke*.
- b. Being that in the recent past, we are expected to bring the *maayanos* of Chassidus to a *chutza* that has never been reached before, excessive consumption of *mashke* could seriously harm this goal.

The Rebbe adds that he once heard the Friediker Rebbe say while he was in Riga “אין ביין איצטער ווי נאך” — “**I am now** (—meaning not just that particular moment, but that entire period of a few years that he minimized his taking *mashke*—) **as if I was after a bit of mashke.**”

Although the obvious reason was due to health, we as Chassidim know that there is a *p'nimius* to everything as well. This is an indication to us Chassidim, the “body” that follows the “head,” that we are also able to reach such a point of being post-*mashke*.¹⁷

אן א חשבון

וכיון שכבר נכנסו לדירתם החדשה, הנה צריך הי' לסדר בה א חסידישן פארבריינגען כדבעי למהוי, און דערמאנען זיך אויף די אלטע צייטען, אז מען האט פארבראכט אויף א פארבריינגען א חשבון מה יאמר פלוני ופלוני, ומה יאמר צד השמאל שבו או צד הימין, ורק ידעו שהתועדות חסידות, לשמוע חסידות, א חסידישן ווארט, וספור מנשיאנו זי"ע, הנה זה מכנים אור, ומעט אור דוחה הרבה חשך.

(אג"ק ח"ד עמ' שיט)

The farbrengen has always been and will always be a staple in our lives as Chassidim. Especially in

the later years, the Rebbe constantly encouraged the Chassidim to arrange chassidisher farbrengens; *on yomei d'pagra*, on one's birthday, or even without significant cause—כל יום זמנו הוא, as the Rebbe once said.¹⁸

The unique ability of the chassidisher farbrengen to bring Yidden together and bring about the greatest of blessings is abundantly clear from the words of our Rabbeim.

In a special *yechidus* to *anash* of Kfar Chabad at the conclusion of Tishrei, 5744, the Rebbe called on all the inhabitants of the town to live together with *ahavas Yisroel*, remembering that we are all children of the Rebbe—אב אחד לכולנו. Just before leaving the shul, the Rebbe suggested that they hold a farbrengen to discuss how to implement all of the above.

“My participation,” the Rebbe concluded, “will be while I am physically elsewhere, but in spirit—here!” **T**

FURTHER READING:

More on the importance and power of a chassidisher farbrengen:

Sichas Pesach 5694, *Likutei Dibburim* vol. 1 p. 235

Sefer Hamaamorim Kuntreisim vol. 2 p. 806

1. As directed in Hayom Yom 24 Sivan
2. Igros Kodesh vol. 10 p. 60
3. Printed in Igros Kodesh vol. 3 p. 156; available in English in *The Making of Chassidim* by SIE
4. Ibid. p. 171
5. Friediker Rebbe's letter printed in Kovetz Michtavim - Tehillim Ohel Yosef Yitzchak (originally appeared in “HaTomim”).
6. Based on a letter in Igros Kodesh Admur HaRaYYaTZ vol. 4 p. 242
7. See *Now More than Ever* in the Derher Magazine - Tishrei 5776 about the farbrengens of Chassidim in the Soviet Union.
8. Igros Kodesh vol. 9 p. 246
9. Toras Menachem vol. 3 p. 162
10. Igros Kodesh vol. 9 p. 85
11. Ibid. vol. 16 p. 160
12. See the Rebbe's lengthy explanation, Toras Menachem vol. 29 p. 182
13. Sefer Hasichos 5685 p. 70
14. Sefer Hasichos 5691 p. 184. See lengthy explanation from the Rebbe, Hisvaaduyos 5742 vol. 3 p. 1336.
15. Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 2 p. 1087
16. See Sefer Hasichos 5704 p. 84, et al.
17. Igros Kodesh vol. 7 p. 58
18. Hisvaaduyos 5749 vol. 1 p. 404