



# Binding Thread

## *Ahava of Chassidim to the Rebbe*

אהבה איז דער רוח החיים אין עבודת החסידות, דער חוט המקשר חסידים איינעם מיט דעם אנדערען, און דער חוט המקשר רבי מיט חסידים און חסידים מיט רבי'ן. עס איז הן בדרך אור ישר הן בדרך אור חוזר, האט קיינע מחיצות נישט, און עס איז העכער פון דער הגבלה פון מקום וזמן. (היום יום כו שבט).

*Ahava*, affection, is the breath of life in the *avodah* of Chassidus. It is the thread that binds Chassidim to each other; it binds the Rebbe to Chassidim and chassidim to the Rebbe. *Ahava* works in a direct way (initiated affection) and also in a reflective way (responding to the other's affection). It knows no barriers and transcends the limits of time and place. (Hayom Yom 26 Shevat).

So much has been said about the Rebbe's immense *ahavas Yisroel* for every single Yid, no matter who and no matter where in the world, and no matter where they stood in terms of Yiddishkeit. Each and every person felt like an only child in the Rebbe's presence.

Obviously, the Rebbe's love for every Yid is not of regular human capacity. The Rebbe, as *rosh b'nei Yisroel*, is inherently connected to every Yid and serves as a channel to bring the love of the Aibershter Himself to each and every one of them (as explained in Tanya *perek beis*).

As a result of the love showered by the Rebbe onto each one of us, we as Chassidim respond with love to the Rebbe and with devotion to fulfilling all his wishes faithfully.

But in addition to the natural feeling of love towards the Rebbe, one of the most important *darkei haChassidus* is to actually work on developing a personal feeling and connection to the Rebbe.

The reason for this is two-fold:

Firstly, the Rebbe, as our “head,” is the channel for bringing all the *hashpa’a* to the people of his generation, in *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*; much as Moshe Rabbeinu provided his generation with *gashmiyus*—the *mann*, and *ruchniyus*—the Torah. In order to receive *hashpa’a* directly and in good spirit, one needs to be connected and devoted to the “head.”

The Alter Rebbe writes in *Iggeres HaKodesh* that spiritual sustenance provided by a *tzaddik* depends on the level of one’s closeness and love to him:

“כל אחד כפי בחי' התקשרותו וקרבתו אליו בחייו ובמותו  
באהבה רבה כי המשכת כל רוחניות אינה אלא ע"י אהבה רבה...”<sup>1</sup>

(When explaining this concept of connecting to a *tzaddik* in *Tanya perek beis*, the Alter Rebbe also leaves the open route for those who rebel: they also receive their sustenance from the head; but only in an indirect manner. Obviously, the proper and ultimate way is by connecting oneself outright with the head).

Additionally, in order to fulfill the Rebbe’s *hora’os* and to properly live our lives as Chassidim, it is important to foster a feeling of love to the Rebbe.

On the *possuk* ואהבת את ה' אלקיך, Rashi quotes the Midrash: “עשה דבריו מאהבה. אינו דומה העושה מאהבה” —Fulfill His [Hashem’s] words out of love. One cannot compare he who serves [his master] out of love to he who serves out of fear...”<sup>2</sup>

The Frieddiker Rebbe speaks with great affection of the inherent love that Chassidim over the generations felt towards the Rebbe, describing how deep and far reaching it always was.

In so many of the Rebbe’s letters and *sichos*, he explains how important it is to contemplate on our connection with the Rebbe, and to remember how he is connected to each and every one of us until it is engrained in our minds and hearts. The Rebbe uses exceptional terms when speaking of the obligation of a Chossid to think about his connection with the Rebbe: על כו"א להתבונן, יעמיק דעתו, לתקוע במחשבתו —contemplate upon it deeply, let it be etched firmly in your mind, and so on.

It was this notion that Chassidim spent so many hours farbrenging about and discussing with one another at long-night farbrengens. They spoke of the Rebbe himself and of their own personal connection with him; recalling the Rebbe’s love for each and every Yid and his dedication for their physical and spiritual wellbeing. All of this in attempt to foster a true, personal and *p’nimiyusdike* love to the Rebbe.



THE REBBE PAUSES TO READ A TZETEL FROM A CHILD.

## PALPABLE LOVE

The Frieddiker Rebbe writes in a letter:

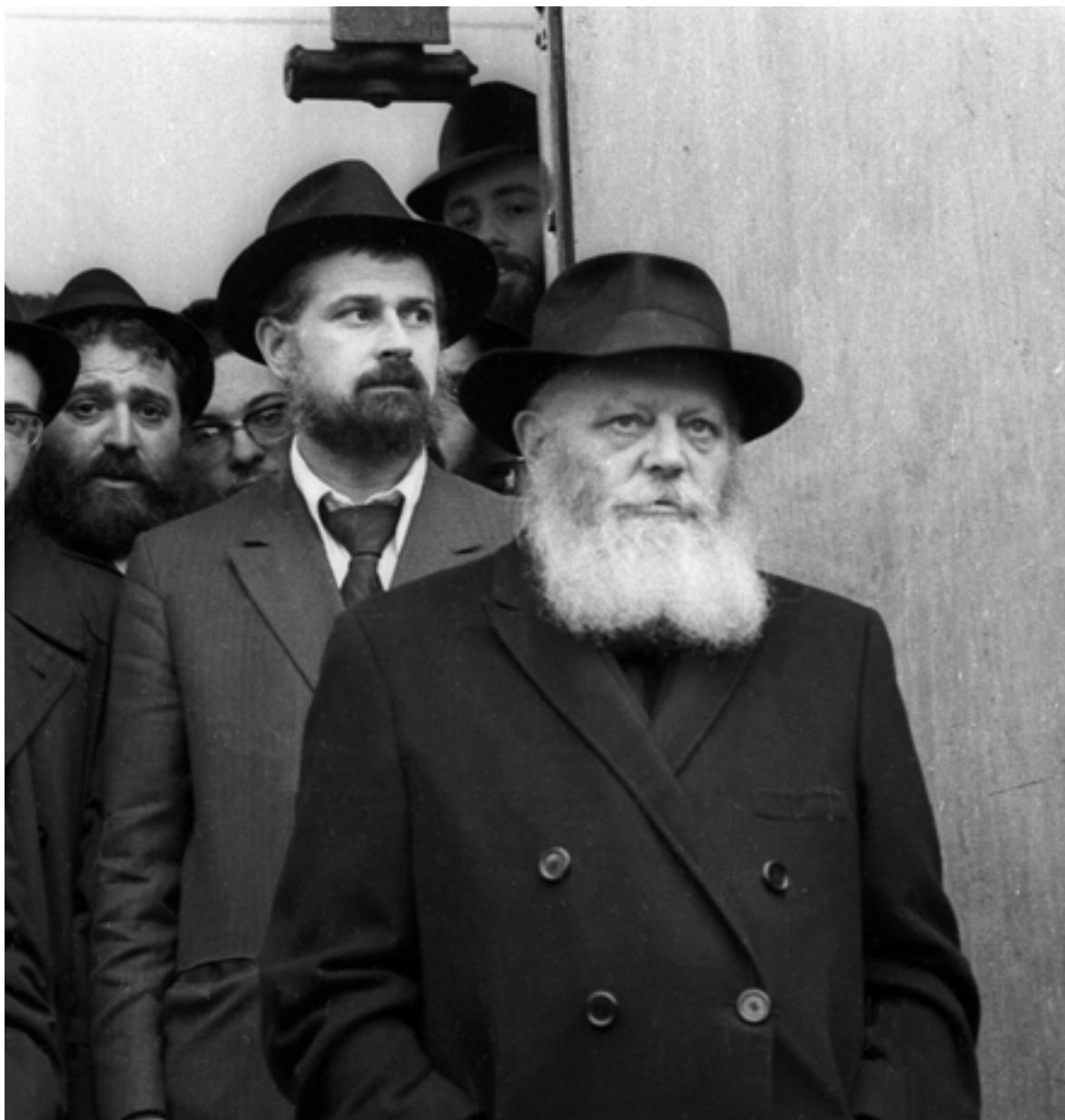
The true *hiskashrus* is by learning the *maamarim* and *kuntreisim*, by farbrenging with *anash*, and by fostering a love. The custom of Chassidim *mekusharim* in each generation was to set aside a fixed time, one hour a day, or once a week, once every two weeks, or once a month, when they’d arouse a feeling of love towards their Rebbe —פשוט ליעב האבן דעם רביין— loving the Rebbe with a palpable love, just as one loves his own wife and children. (This is in addition to mentioning the Rebbe during bentching—הרחמן הוא יברך את מורנו—)

Arousing these feelings of love, they would envision the times that they were in *yechidus* or when they heard Chassidus or were at a farbrengen. With this, they always remained *mekushar*.

The most important thing is that every individual must do his *avodah*, each according to his ability...

(*Igros Kodesh* vol. 6 p. 353)





JEM 205652

קשה עלי פרידתכם: THE REBBE ESCORTS THE GUESTS THAT CAME FROM ERETZ YISROEL FOR TISHREI.

## The Power of Love

There are two places in Hayom Yom where the Rebbe speaks about the love of a Rebbe and Chossid.

One is 26 Shevat—quoted at the beginning of this article—explaining how *ahava* is the thread that binds the Rebbe and Chassidim. The other is on 14 Shevat, where the Rebbe writes of the practice held by the Rabbeim to think of each one of their *mekusharim*.

Both of these entries to Hayom Yom are quotes from a letter by the Frierdiker Rebbe from the year 5699 (תרצ"ט),<sup>3</sup> where he talks elaborately on how special the love of Chassidim towards their Rebbe is.

There, the Frierdiker Rebbe relates a story he heard from his father, the Rebbe Rashab:

Once, the Tzemach Tzedek was engaged in a scholarly discussion with two of his sons, Reb Yisroel Noach and Reb Chaim Schneur Zalman, and his son-in-law, Reb Levi Yitzchok.

Taking in the Tzemach Tzedek's vast knowledge and deep perception, Reb Yisroel Noach was in awe, and he said to his father: "Now I see the power of your Chassidim, true *mekusharim*, who bless you whole-heartedly!"

The Tzemach Tzedek responded: "Indeed, the love of Chassidim and their blessing pierces the heavens. Moshe Elya's (one of the *balle-battim* in Vitebsk whose knowledge and *avodah* were average, but he was a big *mekushar*) 'horachamon' during bentching, full of love, bears fruit on high, and has its effect down here as well..."

Love is a very lofty and powerful force in *ruchniyus*, the Frierdiker Rebbe explains. That's why by the time it gets down here to *olam hazeh*, it falls so low and can be misused, potentially bringing a person to the lowest levels of *tumah*. The higher its source in the upper worlds, the lower it can fall down here in this world.

The power of *ahava* is infinite. It can connect two individuals even if they are worlds apart from one another, because no physical distance can stand in its way.

The Frierdiker Rebbe concludes with the anecdote quoted in Hayom Yom 14 Shevat:

"Our Holy Rebbeim through the generations, in addition to evoking *rachamim* [from Hashem] toward their *mekusharim*, they also had an *avodah* of bringing their Chassidim to mind, inwardly, pondering their affection and attachment to the Rebbe, reciprocating that affection and attachment. Bringing someone to mind has the effect of arousing that person's innermost powers. We see that when one looks deeply and intently at another he will turn around and return the glance, because the penetrating gaze awakens the core of the soul. Thought has the same effect."

Based on this *vort*, the Rebbe explains that when a person feels a sudden sense of *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe, or an urge to connect himself to the Rebbe for no apparent reason, it may be because the Rebbe thought about him at that particular moment, awakening this feeling within the Chossid. It is important to immediately act upon this feeling of *hiskashrus* and do something that expresses his connection to the Rebbe, in order that the awakening should have a lasting effect.<sup>4</sup>

## Think Deeply

Chassidus explains that when the Torah commands us to love Hashem, our obligation is to contemplate deeply into His infinite greatness, thereby fostering a love towards Him.<sup>5</sup>

In a similar vein, reading the Rebbe's letters and *sichos*, we find how the Rebbe instructs Chassidim to think deeply about the Rebbe's connection to them, until it is etched in their minds.

To a Chossid who wasn't well and therefore fell into depression, the Rebbe wrote:

"To think about your own situation, there are specific times. But for the remainder of your time, it is more appropriate to think about the Rebbe; how he is always with his *mekusharim* and guides their each and every step..."<sup>6</sup>

In a letter about the day of Beis Nissan, the day the Frierdiker Rebbe became *nossi*, the Rebbe instructs:

"Each and every one must contemplate, and affirm in his mind and heart (להתבונן ולקבוע במוחו ולבו), that our shepherd did not forsake his flock, *chas v'shalom*..."<sup>7</sup>

In another letter the Rebbe uses similar exceptional terms:

"Each and every one of us must know and contemplate deeply, and fix his thought on this (להעמיק דעתו ולתקוע מחשבתו בזה), that he is the *nossi* and the *rosh*, and through him we receive all *hashpa'os*, material and spiritual..."<sup>8</sup>

The Rebbe is teaching us that it is not enough to suffice merely with the natural love we have to the Rebbe. It is our duty to think about this concept deeply and affectionately, always bearing it in mind.

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## THE YOUNG ONES

*The Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana, took great pleasure in watching the Rebbe lead klal Yisroel, and especially in observing the outburst of love from Chassidim to the Rebbe; particularly the youth. The following lines from her diary were written after attending a simchas beis hashoeiva farbrengen with the Rebbe in the early years:*

I was delighted to see such a large number of young people attending and how great their interest was in all the activities of my son, *shlita*. I observed how they look upon him with such a love that is indescribable. It was apparent from the way they were hurrying, by subway, by car, in groups, each trying to get ahead of the other in

order to get a better place so that they should be able to see and hear as much as possible.

They were from all types of background—non-Chasidim, Chasidim, Polish Chasidim, Litvish, old and young, non-religious and *frum*. The same was true for the women. Everyone tried to find a place where they could not only hear but also see.

May G-d grant my son good health and success to be able to accomplish his work, to achieve what he desires without hindrance, in physical and emotional tranquility.<sup>9</sup>



## SUCH GREAT PEOPLE!

*When the Rebbe left his room at 770 for the first time since his heart attack in 5738, joy and celebration ensued. The following are the recollections of Reb Mendel Notik who stood with the Rebbetzin and watched that special moment from the second floor of 770. Perhaps more than anything else, the Rebbetzin expressed her pleasure at the outburst of love she observed from Chassidim towards the Rebbe:*

When the Rebbe was getting ready to leave 770 at about 9:00 at night, people were packed in front of 770, as the strong desire to see the Rebbe was then at fever pitch (since most of *anash* had not seen the Rebbe since the events of Shemini Atzeres). The Rebbetzin was watching the joyous spectacle from inside the Frierdiker Rebbe's *yechidus* room, upstairs in 770, with the lights turned off in order not to be seen (and perhaps to be able to see better).

Another fellow and I had the *zechus* to be there with the Rebbetzin, watching. Suddenly, like a bolt of lightning, a happy *niggun* burst from the mouths of the assembled throngs, and people were jumping in the air to get just one glimpse of their beloved Rebbe. It was absolutely electrifying—you could feel their love for the Rebbe with your hands. I burst into tears, and out of the corner of my eye, I glanced at the Rebbetzin and it seemed to me that her eyes also became teary. Then she said in Yiddish/Russian, “*Ah-zelche maladyetz'n!*” (Roughly translated: Such great people!) She repeated this a few times, glowing with love.

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## Overflowing

When Reb Yosef Shokron, a *mekurav* from France, was taking his first steps to Yiddishkeit, he had the *zechus* to be by the Rebbe in *yechidus*. One of the questions he asked the Rebbe was: Is it normal that

Chassidim love the Rebbe so much? It seems a bit exaggerated.

The Rebbe responded: “What can I do that I love each and every Jew in an overflowing manner!”<sup>10</sup>

## The Rebbe's Pain

Reb Shmuel Gurary was a prominent Chossid of the Rebbe Rashab and the Frierdiker Rebbe. A great financial supporter of all their endeavors, he was known to be a true *mekushar*.

Before shofar-blowing on Rosh Hashanah, he was seen crying profusely. Many Chassidim cried at that solemn time, a result of the awe-inspiring moment. But about Reb Shmuel it was said that he cried because he observed the Rebbe crying.

Once, the Rebbe Rashab called together a meeting of a few wealthy Chassidim, including Reb Shmuel, in attempt to raise funds for a certain project. Incidentally, Reb Shmuel came a few minutes late and remained outside the door while the meeting had already begun. He listened how the Rebbe Rashab asked them for a certain amount and the Chassidim argued that the sum needed was in fact much less. Furious, Reb Shmuel thought to himself, “If you don't want to give the money then say just that! How could they have the *chutzpah* to argue with the Rebbe like that?”

Reb Shmuel ran immediately to the Frierdiker Rebbe's room nearby and asked him that he go to his father and tell him that someone has undertaken the responsibility of donating the entire sum of money. He also asked the Frierdiker Rebbe to agree to two conditions: the meeting must end right away and the Rebbe Rashab must not be told who the anonymous donor is.

Reb Shmuel knew that the Rebbe Rashab was aware that he was going through a rough time financially, and he didn't wish to cause the Rebbe unnecessary pain.<sup>11</sup>

## In the Rebbe's Presence

When the Frierdiker Rebbe left Russia at the end of Tishrei, 5688 (תרפ"ח), Chassidim were distraught. No one knew if they would ever be able to see the Rebbe again, as the Iron Curtain would separate between them.

The Frierdiker Rebbe assured Chassidim that the physical distance would be of no significance and that





THE REBBE LEAVES A FARBRENGEN THAT BEGAN AT 3:30AM TO WELCOME THE PASSENGERS OF THE CHARTERED FLIGHT FROM ENGLAND, 20 TAMMUZ 5721.

they would still be very much connected; and in fact they would see one-another again.

Reb Pinye Althoiz told the Frierdiker Rebbe that he felt bewildered. There are those Chassidim who would “live” from the Chassidim they learn. Others would draw inspiration from their lengthy davening. “I, on the other hand,” Reb Pinye bemoaned, “have nothing else in my life other than being in the Rebbe’s presence. How will I survive?”

The Frierdiker Rebbe then promised Reb Pinye that he would be “עמי במחיצתי”.<sup>12</sup>

The Frierdiker Rebbe’s *mazkir*, Reb Yechezkel (“Chatche”) Faigin writes in a letter:

I recall once at a farbrengen in Lubavitch (I don’t remember if this was on Simchas Torah or Yud-Tes Kislev), one of the participants said to the Rebbe [Rashab], “Rebbe; keep me in mind!” (רבי האט מײך אין)

(זינען). The Rebbe [Rashab] responded: “Keep me in your heart!” (האט מײך אין הארצן). **1**

1. Biur on Iggeres HaKodesh 27
2. Devarim 6:5
3. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRaYatz vol. 4 p. 429
4. Motzoei Shabbos 11 Shevat 5721 - Toras Menachem vol. 30 p. 63
5. V’Ahavta 5701 - Sefer HaMaamarim 5701 p. 116
6. Igros Kodesh vol. 3 p. 419
7. Ibid. p. 256
8. Ibid. p. 332
9. Rebbetzin Chana’s Memoirs part 36
10. From Reb Yosef’s diary
11. *B’Darkei HaChassidim* by Reb Yoel Kahn p. 97
12. According to another version of this story, the Frierdiker Rebbe said, “You are the one I will truly long for...” The former version was related at Reb Pinye’s *levaya* by the *mashpia*, Reb Shlomo Chaim Kesselman.