



Not Forgotten

By: Rabbi Mottel Slonim

Reb Shlomo Vishedzky was born in the Soviet Union in the year 5710, while his father was in prison for his activities in spreading Yiddishkeit. When his father was finally released, the family moved to Eretz Yisroel. The first time Shlomo came to the Rebbe was as part of the “Kvutza” program for the year 5729.

Towards the end of the year, during Elul, the famous Mashpia, Reb Mendel Futerfas, had come to 770. Shlomo knew Reb Mendel well, as he was a very close friend of his father, Reb Moshe.

When Reb Mendel came, he farbrenged with the *bochurim*, and when the *mashke* ran out, he turned to Shlomo and said, “I’m appointing you to be the ‘*Sar Hamashkin*’; your job is to make sure there is always *mashke* available for a farbrengen.”

Shlomo took his job seriously. With absolutely no money of his own, he started collecting money to purchase *mashke*, eventually acquiring two big bottles.

On 26 Elul, the Rebbe notified that there would be a surprise farbrengen. It was the third night of Selichos, which was a special night for the Rabbeim. This was unprecedented; the Rebbe had never farbrenged on *Leil Gimmel D’Selichos* before. Some people speculated that it was in honor of the many Chassidim who had recently left the Soviet Union and were spending Tishrei with the Rebbe for the first time.

The Rebbe began with a *maamar*, followed by a *sicha* in which he spoke about the Yidden who had recently left Russia and come to New York. The Rebbe also spoke of the importance of saying L’chaim, and instructed all those who had come out of Russia to say L’chaim for those who were still in the “*meitzar*” (in the narrow straits, i.e. in Russia) and that they, together with their families, should be able to leave, “*el hamerchav*” (to freedom).

After the *sicha*, the Rebbe began giving out L’chaim to many of the recent immigrants. It was a very special moment;

for half an hour the Rebbe was giving them L’chaim, asking many of them about their names and which cities they were from. The Rebbe also gave bottles of *mashke* to be distributed to others at the Farbrengen. After the next *sicha*, the Rebbe continued distributing *mashke*, and at a certain point, the *mashke* ran out.

The Rebbe asked for more *mashke*, to continue giving L’chaim, but there was none to be found. The Rebbe asked a few times, “Are there no more bottles of *mashke*?” but no one seemed able to procure any.

At that moment, Shlomo remembered that he had two bottles. He ran to his room to get the *mashke*, elated at the *zechus* to be able to provide something important for the Rebbe. He ran back to 770 with the *mashke* in hand. Seeing what he was carrying, people made space for Shlomo as he went up to the platform where the Rebbe was. But, as he got closer, an elder chossid grabbed the bottles from him, motioning that he should return to his place. The elder chossid brought the *mashke* to the Rebbe himself. Shlomo was devastated; he had been so excited to have his special moment with the Rebbe, and it was taken from him.

As the farbrengen drew to a close, the Rebbe began singing “*Ki v’simcha*”; an indication that it was the end of the farbrengen. But the Rebbe continued dancing with this *niggun*, then asked that some other *niggunim* be sung. Then suddenly the Rebbe said, “וואו איז דער וואס האט געבראכט די משקה—Where is the individual who brought the *mashke*?”

People near Shlomo began motioning to him, telling him to go up to the Rebbe. Shlomo approached the Rebbe with great emotion, and the Rebbe poured him L’chaim and said, “*Yasher koach, L’chaim!*”

The Rebbe made sure that Shlomo would have his moment after all.