



Gateway TO *Shamayim*

THE REBBE
AT THE OHEL

By: Rabbi Mendel Jacobs



An individual once came to the Rebbe at “dollars,” asking for advice, adding that “I wrote two letters to the Rebbe; the matter is very urgent.”

The Rebbe replied:

“It is as if I have already read the letters, and I will mention the matter at the Ohel of my father-in-law. May Hashem help that everything should turn out for the good.”

The Rebbe added:

“I have announced publicly several times that whenever someone writes to me, I take the letter to the Ohel and mention it there, and then my father-in-law does what he needs to do. There’s no need to wait for a response from me through the mail...”¹

As we approach Gimmel Tammuz, let us explore some of what the Rebbe said about connecting with the Rebbe at the Ohel.

לע"נ
ר' משה בן ר' זלמן צבי ע"ה
גלב"ע אסרו חג השבועות ה'תשע"ח
ת"נ'צ"ב'ה'

נתרם ע"י נכדו
הרה"ת ר' שלום דובער וזוגתו מרת ח'
מושקא ומשפחתם שיחיו
שוחאט



29 ELUL 5726

In the Beginning

After the Frierdiker Rebbe's *histalkus* on Yud Shevat 5710, the Rebbe encouraged Chassidim to maintain their connection with him, ensuring them that as a faithful shepherd of his people, a Rebbe does not forsake his flock.

In the first letter written by the Rebbe at the conclusion of *shiva*, the Rebbe writes:

My father-in-law, the [Frierdiker] Rebbe, writes in one of his letters about the *histalkus* of his father [the Rebbe Rashab], that *tzaddikim*, the protectors of the world [are active] even after their passing:

“Not only will they never forsake their flock; they will place themselves at the feet of the Divine throne, standing before Almighty G-d to defend the Jewish people...”

All of this is also true about my father-in-law, the [Frierdiker] Rebbe.

However, we, from our part, must solidify and strengthen our connection and bond

with him, bringing it to much greater potency than before. This is accomplished by learning his *maamarim*, *sichos*, and letters, delving into the lessons found in these writings, as well as the instructions he gave to each individual. In this manner, we will follow the upright path he showed us through his ways, and continue in his footsteps forever and ever...²

A primary avenue that the Rebbe encouraged Chassidim to maintain their connection with the Frierdiker Rebbe was by visiting his holy resting place at the Ohel, knowing that “this is where the Rebbe is.”³ At one point during those first months, Reb Zalman Gurary approached the Rebbe and asked: What is so significant about visiting the Ohel specifically? Is it not possible to connect with the Frierdiker Rebbe at any time and in any place?

The Rebbe replied: The holy *seforim* state that wherever the lowest part of a person is, it is possible to connect with the deepest and innermost part of the *neshama* (*Yechida sheb'nefesh*) of that person.⁴

The Rebbe himself would visit the Ohel often. In the earlier years, it was twice a month: on the 15th

and Erev Rosh Chodesh, in addition to several special dates (like *yomei d'pagra*, *isru chag*, and others). As the years passed, the Rebbe's visits became more frequent. Beginning in the year 5746, the Rebbe began visiting the Ohel at least twice a week, on Sunday (or Monday) and Thursday, and oftentimes much more.

The Rebbe connected all the *brachos* he gave people throughout the years with the Frieddiker Rebbe's Ohel, almost always notifying the people requesting his *brachos* that "I will mention this at the Ohel."

Already in the first months of the Rebbe's *nesius*, people noticed how he associated much of his holy work with his visits to the Ohel. In Sivan 5710, the Rebbe told several individuals who had asked for his *brachos* and advice that he would respond after visiting the Ohel.⁵ Likewise, the Rebbe was seen bringing recent Kehos publications with him to the Ohel (presumably, much as he would bring them to the Frieddiker Rebbe during his physical lifetime).⁶

Part of a Bigger Whole

Why do we need to connect to the Rebbe in this way? And why don't we simply daven to Hashem directly?

The Rebbe addressed this question on several occasions. In a letter to an individual who asked the Rebbe to mention him in prayer at the Ohel, even though he "doesn't understand what this is about," the Rebbe said: When you eat and drink, you don't necessarily understand the exact process of how this nourishes your body. But you do it nonetheless, because you know it's what you must do. The same can be said about connecting with the Rebbe at the Ohel.

The Rebbe then addressed his questions on this subject:

How is this not an example of communicating with the dead, which is forbidden by the Torah?

The answer is: When people came to the



Rebbe during his lifetime to seek his blessing, it was not his body they were visiting, but his saintly *neshama*. Obviously, the whole concept of death applies only to the body; the *neshama* is everlasting. When a *tzaddik* passes away, it is referred to as “*histalkus*,” which means an elevation, because the *neshama* is now at a higher level; not dead, *chas v’shalom*.

Another question: Is this not an instance of turning to an entity other than Hashem for your needs?

Firstly, says the Rebbe, the concept of praying at the resting place of a *tzaddik* is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition. Kalev ben Yefuneh prayed at the resting place

of the *Avos*, as related in the Gemara, and so did many Tannaim and Amoraim throughout the generations.

The reason this is proper conduct:

We are asking the *tzaddik*, in his righteousness and holiness, to intercede with Hashem on our behalf.

Every Chossid is a part of the *neshama* of his Rebbe. Much like the various limbs of the body all derive their vitality from the brain, so too does each individual *neshama* receive its vitality through the *neshama* of the “head”—the Rebbe, as explained in Tanya *perek* 2. In order for any individual limb to stay healthy, it needs to maintain a strong connection, through the



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 14027 (29 ELUL 5735)

An “Ohel Day”

Rabbi Binyomin Klein, the Rebbe’s longtime mazkir, once spoke of the way the Rebbe prepared himself for a visit to the Ohel:

The Rebbe would prepare for a visit to the Ohel in the same way one prepares themselves for Rosh Hashanah during the month of Elul. Already the night before the visit, tension was felt in the Rebbe’s room, like something serious was at hand. This was true of every single visit throughout the years; whether in 5752 or decades earlier.

The *mazkirim* always knew that the day of an Ohel visit was different. All responses from the Rebbe would be more concise. Whenever we received a letter for the Rebbe on an Ohel day, if I knew that it wasn’t absolutely urgent, I would wait to bring it to the Rebbe until after the visit.⁷

On one occasion, a *bochur* in 770 wrote a note to the Rebbe asking whether his sister should travel from Eretz Yisroel to New York to meet with a potential *shidduch*. As the travel agent was pressuring her family to book the trip before prices went up, the *bochur* asked Rabbi Klein to try and receive the Rebbe’s answer as soon as possible.

Rabbi Klein explained that the Rebbe would be going to the Ohel later that day, so it wasn’t a good idea to ask now, but he promised to try. After a few moments in the Rebbe’s room, Rabbi Klein came back to the *bochur* and said, “You see; I told you so...” When Rabbi Klein had given the note to the Rebbe, the Rebbe opened it up and began reading, then immediately said: “I see this is a question about a *shidduch*. This needs deeper examination. I can’t respond now before going to the Ohel.”⁸



nerves, to the head above. Similarly, in order for a Chossid to remain healthy, physically and spiritually, he must maintain a strong connection with the Rebbe.⁹

The Chasam Sofer conveys a similar idea in his *teshuvos*:

If one asks the Malachim to bring his requests to Hashem, it is considered approaching Hashem through an intermediary. However, asking another Jew to pray on your behalf is not like using an intermediary, since “all Jews are part of one body and one soul. When one of them is in pain, the pain is felt by his fellow Jew as well. Since they are both equally in pain, it is better to send the ‘head’ to ask Hashem for mercy, than to send the foot. The ‘head’ in this case is the *talmid chacham*...”

The head actually feels the pain more potently than the foot, even when the foot itself is hurting. Obviously, it would be better to ask the “head” to intercede.¹⁰

The Mitteler Rebbe discusses 5 levels when it comes to visiting the Ohel of a *tzaddik*. One of the ideas he speaks about is similar to the way one would go into *yechidus* with his Rebbe

during his lifetime:

“When he walked into his Rebbe’s chamber during his lifetime, [the Chossid] was completely nullified. He would be bashful and would shrink in the presence of the *tzaddik*, becoming lifeless, like a stone, without the ability to speak. This is true *bittul*... Similarly, when a person goes to [the *tzaddik*’s] holy resting place, he should lose all self-concern in an even more powerful manner. For ‘*tzaddikim* are greater after their death than in their lifetime’...”

By connecting with the *tzaddik* in this way, the Mitteler Rebbe explains, “the powerful bond of faith tying the soul of the *tzaddik* to the inner core of the person’s heart, [as amplified by] the power of imagery... makes it possible for the person’s *neshama* to cling to a particular dimension of the *neshama* of the *tzaddik* resting there...”¹¹

But if this connection is of a spiritual nature, isn’t it possible to connect with the *tzaddik* anywhere?

The Mitteler Rebbe explains that due to the many challenges of *parnassa* and other



material pursuits, the passionate connection we once felt with the *tzaddik* can become dormant. In order to rekindle the flame of connection and prevent it from being extinguished completely, we must make periodic visits to his holy resting place, “to reignite the love within the person’s inner self, and from the depths of his heart...”¹²

“Do You Know How To Talk To My Father?”

Indeed, throughout the generations, the Rebbeim often regarded their visits to the Ohalim of their predecessors much in the same manner as they did visiting them during their physical lifetimes.

A fascinating episode in this regard was recorded by Reb Yisroel Jacobson in his memoirs, around the year 5685, shortly after the rise of the Communist regime in Russia. The Frierdiker Rebbe appointed Reb Yisroel as his personal shliach to visit the Ohel of the Rebbe Rashab in Rostov on his *yahrtzeit*. Before his departure for Rostov, the Frierdiker Rebbe gave Reb Yisroel detailed instructions about the trip, along with many *panim* that were to be brought to the Ohel. Reb Yisroel concludes:

“Before I left the room, the [Frierdiker] Rebbe turned to me and said, ‘Yisroel! Do you know how to speak to my father?’ I was dumbfounded. ‘You must speak to my father as you would in *yechidus*; you were in *yechidus* with my father in the past. You should say, ‘Rebbe! I am a shliach of your son and of your Rebbetzin. They appointed me as their shliach.’ Then you should say the Maane Loshon...”¹³

Similarly, the Rebbe encouraged Chassidim to regard their writing to the [Frierdiker] Rebbe’s Ohel as they would during his physical lifetime.

In a now-famous handwritten response to Reb Sholom Posner, the Rebbe says:

“Regarding what you ask: [What should one do] when in doubt, for it is not possible to ask the [Frierdiker] Rebbe now? If you will remain steadfast in your *hiskashrus* to him, without paying attention to the arguments of the *yetzer hara*, and you will send your question to the Ohel of the [Frierdiker] Rebbe; the Rebbe will find a way to answer you...”¹⁴

Right Here

Over the generations through millennia, many Jews, especially great *tzaddikim*, went to great lengths to

have their remains interred in Eretz Yisroel. It's interesting, the Rebbe points out, that none of our Rebbeim did so. They are all buried in *Chutz La'aretz*, in close proximity to the Chassidim they led during their lifetimes.

Moshe Rabbeinu himself is also not buried in Eretz Yisroel. The Midrash says that through more intense prayer, Moshe could have prevailed upon Hashem to allow him to enter the Holy Land. But Hashem said to Moshe, "How would it be appropriate for you to enter the Land when all of your flock remain in the desert?" Indeed, Moshe remained with his people throughout his life and thereafter, only to take them with him out of *galus* in the future redemption.

A true *nossi*, the Rebbe said with tears in his eyes, remains in *galus* with his flock, allowing them to keep their connection with him even after his passing, and continuing to bestow his blessings upon them.

By having his resting place near his Chassidim, the Rebbe enables them to come and visit his *tziyun* to ask for all that they need, and to connect the innermost part of their *neshama* ("Yechida") with the innermost part of his *neshama*. This, in turn, manifests and gives strength to the Chassidim in their daily *avodas Hashem*, in thought, speech, and action.

In fact, just the *knowledge* that the Rebbe's *tziyun* is nearby, close enough that we could visit it anytime, is sufficient to give us an incredible boost in our *avodas Hashem*.¹⁵

Davening in Eretz Yisroel

When davening to Hashem and asking for all our needs, we are told to face Eretz Yisroel. In other locations, it is more difficult to connect directly to Hashem; but the Torah tells us that Hashem's eyes are upon Eretz Yisroel from the beginning of the year till the end.

However, employing a halachic ruling from the laws of *tuma* and *tahara*, the Rebbe reveals a fascinating truth:

The halacha is, that when a tunnel is built outside the Beis Hamikdash whose opening is within the holy boundaries, the whole interior of the tunnel is considered part of the holy.

Since, when Moshiach comes, all the *tzaddikim* will be brought to Eretz Yisroel through tunnels that will open up into the Holy Land, it follows that the area of the *tzaddik's* resting place can be considered within the holy.

And though the tunnels are not yet open, we can still consider the area holy, based on the fact that it'll be opened in the future:

The halacha is that when a source of *tumas meis* is in a room with many doorways, all those doorways carry *tuma* to the outside (if an object is found outside, under the lintel of the doorway). However, if a person intends to





carry the source of *tuma* through one of those doorways, all the other doorways are considered pure. In other words, just the plan to carry something through a doorway is enough to consider that doorway already open.

If this is true regarding the impure, all the more so should it be true about the pure and holy: The mere fact that in the future, there will be an opening from the resting place of the *tzaddik* into the Holy Land is enough to consider this spot holy *now*.

Furthermore, in a sense, the *tzaddik's tziyun* is even holier than Eretz Yisroel in its current state:

At the moment, the Beis Hamikdash is not yet rebuilt, and the holiness of Eretz Yisroel remains limited. However, Chassidus teaches that the *neshamos* of true *tzaddikim* never actually experienced the *churban*. They are able to tap into and connect with the holiness of Eretz Yisroel in its purest state, before the terrible spiritual destruction of *galus*.

It stands to reason that davening to Hashem at the Rebbe's *tziyun* has a greater advantage than davening in Eretz Yisroel today!¹⁶

Straight Up to Heaven

As a sacred space of immense *kedusha*, the Rebbe pointed to the *tziyun* as a place from where a person's requests are taken straight up to Hashem without delay.

A day after the victory in the trial over the *seforim* on Hei Teves, the Rebbe encouraged everyone to utilize this auspicious time to write letters with requests for whatever they needed, to be taken straight to the Ohel.

"I will not even read these notes," the Rebbe said, "so there's no need to be ashamed to ask for whatever you wish. These requests will be taken straight up to Hashem, through the Rebbe, *nessi doreinu...*"¹⁷

Similarly, the Rebbe once asked for reports on a new initiative he had launched, saying that these reports would bring him much *nachas*. The Rebbe then added:

"These reports will be brought to the *tziyun* of the [Frierdiker] Rebbe. There's no need to wait for a written response from me, since *al pi halacha*, we can rest assured that the mail service did its job and that the letters were duly received. It's also firmly established based on previous conduct more than three times, that all these letters are brought to the Ohel and left in the

domain of the one who rests at the Ohel [the Frieddiker Rebbe], until they eventually soar up to Heaven in flame...¹⁸

Share It

With such a special treasure in our midst, the Rebbe encouraged Chassidim to share the gift of visiting the Rebbe's Ohel with everyone.

"I don't know the nature of your influence on members of your community," the Rebbe writes to a Chossid, "but it would be appropriate for you to explain to them about the resting place of the greatest *tzaddik* of our generation... [When you travel here next week,] they should make you their agent and send notes with you, since they themselves are unable to visit the [Frieddiker] Rebbe's holy *tziyun*. You will certainly find the right words to elucidate this idea to them..."¹⁹

When many Chabad families were finally allowed to emigrate from the former Soviet Union and moved to Eretz Yisroel in the 5720s, the Rebbe wrote a letter to the Vaad of Kfar Chabad:

"Invite them, on my behalf, to visit here for the upcoming month of Tishrei, to be at the *tziyun* of my father-in-law, the [Frieddiker] Rebbe, and to daven, all of us together, in the shul of my father-in-law, the [Frieddiker] Rebbe, and to study *nigleh* and Chassidus in his *beis midrash*..."²⁰

The Rebbe once pointed out that at the very end of Sefer Bereishis, just before we proclaim "*Chazak, Chazak, V'nischazek*," we read about the passing of Yosef Hatzaddik and his (temporary) internment in Mitzrayim. The message is that even while in a dark and challenging *galus*, the Jewish people gathered strength ("*chazak*") from knowing that Yosef's remains were with them in exile. Moreover, the word the Torah uses to describe Yosef's remains is "*atzmos Yosef*"—literally: the bones of Yosef. But it also indicates that the "*atzmiyus*" of Yosef, his essence, was with them in Mitzrayim too.

Similarly in our time, the Rebbe said, the "Yosef" of our generation, the Frieddiker Rebbe, is buried here with us in *galus*, specifically in our lowly part of the world.

This gives us the doubled and redoubled strength to overcome all the difficult challenges we face in this *galus*, allowing us to carry on doing the work the Rebbe gave us. In this sense we are "*zaro bachayim*," his living children, and we demonstrate that "*hu bachayim*," he is still very much alive.²¹



In our time as well, people from all walks of life visit the Rebbe's Ohel every day, to connect with the *nossi hador* and receive his continued *brachos* and guidance, till the coming of Moshiach, may it be *teikef umiyad mamash*. **T**

1. 4 Nissan 5749.
2. Written as a foreword to Kuntres Likkutei Dibburim, 18 Shevat 5710. Published in Igros Kodesh vol. 3, p. 236.
3. Shabbos Parshas Shlach 5710, Toras Menachem vol. 1, p. 108.
4. Yemei Bereishis p. 166.
5. Yemei Bereishis p. 193.
6. Yemei Bereishis p. 111.
7. Sippurim M'Cheder HaRebbe, p. 168.
8. Kfar Chabad magazine, #1457, 13 Nissan 5772.
9. Igros Kodesh vol. 3, p. 458.
10. Toras Menachem vol. 2, p. 31.
11. Maamar L'havin Inyan Hahishtatchus, Maamarei

- Admur Haemtzei, Kuntreisim, p. 20.
12. Ibid., p. 24.
13. Zikaron Lvnei Yisroel, p. 100.
14. Igros Kodesh vol. 3, p. 265.
15. Yud Shevat 5714, Toras Menachem vol. 11, p. 27.
16. Ibid., p. 30.
17. Hisvaaduyos 5747 vol. 2, p. 182.
18. Sefer Hasichos 5750, vol. 2, p. 503.
19. Igros Kodesh vol. 7, p. 312.
20. Igros Kodesh vol. 24, p. 384.
21. Likkutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 480.