

לעילוי נשמת
השליחה הצדקנית מרת
אסתר הני' בת ר' מנחם
מענדל הכהן ע"ה ז"ל
הויכברג
ת'נ'צ'ב'ה'
בקשר עם יום הולדתה השישים
יום הבהיר ר"ח כסלו

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Step Inside

Farbrengen with the Rebbe — A Companion

A guide to the Farbrengen of
Yud-Tes Kislev 5742.



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Sources

This guide is designed to assist in experiencing the farbrengen on video or audio recording. Timestamps correspond to the video of the farbrengen, linked above.

The Yud-Tes Kislev story is oft repeated, and every chossid is deeply familiar with the details behind the Yom Tov. So let's dive right in—right? Not so fast. We must first pause and take time to reflect on the story itself, and to repeat it anew each year. Why?

The Rebbe doesn't simply begin a farbrengen. He guides us to first understand¹ what we are doing here. "It's 9:30 p.m. on Yud-Tes Kislev, where else would I be but at a farbrengen?" is not enough. If I commemorated the day last year, I need to know why I must be here again today, doing the same thing.

Sicha 1: What are we doing here?

1. Why waste our time?

[0:44]

- The *minhag* is to repeat the significance of the day each time.
- Even though this is not the first time we are commemorating Yud-Tes Kislev.

Why? To add to the question:

Torah values time greatly.

- Time is always precious, especially today—a *yom segula*.
- **Time** is also connected with **place**, which is also special.
- Every **word** is also precious.
 - True, action is the main thing, but speech also has power:
 - The *Asara Maamaros* created the world.
 - The *Aseres Hadibros* gave us the Torah.
 - From here, we learn the importance of every word we say.
- Not only holy speech, but even mundane words carry weight.
- *Chazal* teach [in their signature style: few words with profound meaning]: "*Lo bara Hakadosh Baruch Hu davar echad l'vatalah*"—nothing Hashem does is without purpose.
 - This includes every creation,
 - including every moment and place—also creations.
 - This is obvious: even a human being does not act for no reason; how much more so Hashem.

- As creations, we must emulate Hashem in this detail,
- including always acting with purpose in speech, deed, and thought.
 - Thought is especially important, requiring extra vigilance, as the Rambam teaches.²

Given the significance of time—

- This deepens the question: why does Torah want us to repeat the same stories?
- Pesach is the prime example—it is a mitzvah to retell the story through the Haggadah each year.
 - Even the greatest *chachamim* are obligated to do so.
- In other matters as well
 - —all of which are a *zecher l'yeztias Mitzrayim*—³
- We are told to be *nizkarim*, to remember what happened on that day.

THE HEAVENLY CALENDAR

Reb Yaakov Halevi of Maroish (Marvege), a *mekubal* from the era of the *Rishonim*, compiled a *sefer* titled *Shaalos Uteshuvos Min HaShamayim*. In it, he records questions he posed to the Heavenly Court through *shaalas chalom* (a dream-query).

One such response,⁴ received on Tuesday, Yud-Tes Kislev, included the declaration: "Today is a *yom besura*—an auspicious day." The Rebbe often quotes this wondrous heavenly hint to the events that would take place centuries later on Yud-Tes Kislev.



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- This is learned from the Megillah, where we *verbally* recount the story anew.
- Why spend so much time doing so, even when we already know it?

2. Speak, Reflect, Act.

[8:45]

The Rebbe answers this question: it's not just about the verbal repetition, it's what the remembrance leads to: action.

- The *possuk* itself tells us the reason: *nizkarim* leads to *naasim*.⁵
- By repeating it *verbally*, we increase our *actions* in that regard,
- And action is the goal.
 - Everything about us is for a purpose: to serve Hashem.
 - Especially action, which is the main thing.
- To reach *naasim*—the action—last year's *nizkarim* is not enough.
- Thought is also not enough.
- At the very least, we need a “minor action”—speech.
- When speech leads to proper reflection,
 - As we see with regard to the context of *nizkarim v'naasim*—the Megillah—we read it and thus reflect on the story,
- The reflection leads to proper action.
- Doing so is not simply a repeat of last year; it is on a whole new level.
 - We always rise to new levels in serving Hashem.
 - *Talmidei chachamim ein lahem menucha*—referring to every Jew.
 - Since *kol maasecha l'shem shamayim*, every thought, speech, and action reflects this new level.

Now that we know *why*, the Rebbe explains the *when* and *how* of repeating the story:

When:

- The best time for this is when we gather together as a group in the spirit of *va'havta l'reacha kamocho*, for it is relevant to all.
 - [We do not suspect anyone of lacking knowledge about the significance of Yud-Tes Kislev,
 - Everyone is presumed to know *kol hatorah kulah*, not just most of it.
 - Still, repeating it again brings it into the world.]

NOTHING IS FOR NOTHING

A human being does not act without cause; whenever we do something, there is some reason that motivates us, we do not simply act at random. How much more so with Hashem: every moment in time, every encounter, and every opportunity is divinely arranged with precise intent. Our mission, in emulating Him, is to ensure that all we do, even what seems mundane, carries purpose.

How:

- We do so with *chayus*, for words delivered with enthusiasm draw forth one's inner strength.
 - As illustrated in a story from the Gemara.⁶
- The listener receives it and accepts it too.
 - No matter who delivers the message, truth will be accepted.
 - Every truth reflects the ultimate truth—Hashem's eternal Torah.
- The Alter Rebbe explains similarly in Tanya: proper thought, speech, and action are *karov*, close and accessible, to every Jew.
- It begins with speech—*B'ficha*,
- which leads to increased awareness—*l'avvacha*,
- which leads to action—*la'asoso*.

3. So what is the day about?

[15:44]

With that introduction, the Rebbe turns to explaining the significance and lessons of Yud-Tes Kislev.

The *nekuda* of today's celebration:

- The Alter Rebbe was imprisoned.
 - He was a *posek* in both the revealed and inner dimensions of the Torah, which are one.
- His imprisonment was not accidental; he knew that his work could land him in jail, which was *sakanos nefashos*.
 - While generally one must follow the law of the land, in matters of *Yiddishkeit*, a Jew is not in *galus*—no one can control the *neshama*.
- The arrest came because of his efforts to spread *Yiddishkeit* and Torah.
 - His very name, Shneur, reflects *how* he spread Torah: *shnei-or*, double light,

- both *nigleh* and *chassidus*,
- not as two separate entities, but united in one name.
- Once he was released from imprisonment after 53 days—
 - Chassidim note the connection to the 53 *perakim* of Tanya,
 - and to *gan* (garden), for every Jew is Hashem's garden.
- —the hidden benefit and intent were revealed:
- It led to an increase in all his activities, as light shines more strongly from within darkness.
- Where imprisonment held back his ability to spread Torah, the release brought new life —“*or v'chayus nafsheinu.*”

4. Those Days, Our Times

[20:46]

Having analyzed the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment and release, the Rebbe turns to the practical lessons for our times.

- By reflecting on the above—
 - The imprisonment came as a result of spreading Torah,
 - with *mesirus nefesh*, without regard for any obstacles.
- —We too find strength to spread *Yiddishkeit* with greater enthusiasm and joy.

THE UPPER HAND

The Mittlerer Rebbe revealed that the Alter Rebbe's printing of the Tanya faced strong spiritual opposition. Yet because of the Alter Rebbe's *mesirus nefesh* for Chassidus with the suffering he endured in prison, a remarkable decree was issued in the *beis din shel maala*: “In every matter of Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and good *middos*, all who are connected to the Alter Rebbe and follow his path—*yadam al ha'elyona*—they will have the upper hand.”⁷

- Just as **then** the Alter Rebbe was released and spread Chassidus with even greater vigor, so **too today** everyone can strengthen their efforts.
 - Men, women, and children each contribute on their own level.
- As emphasized earlier, it begins with speech, which inspires emotion, and leads ultimately to action,
- increasing our efforts in all areas for which the Alter Rebbe had *mesirus nefesh*.
- Although the darkness of *galus* is strong,
- Rather than feeling despondent, we celebrate the *geulah* with increased joy,
- and we are guaranteed success.
- This leads to the dispersion of darkness and the arrival of Moshiach—the guaranteed outcome.

Sicha 2: It's All About Peace

At the conclusion of the previous *sicha*, the Rebbe emphasized *la'asoso*—action. This *sicha* opens by identifying the *specific* actions that should be strengthened in connection with Yud-Tes Kislev.

1. Peace Above All?

[34:15]

- Each Yom Tov has unique actions—*mitzvos* and *minhagim*—associated with it, shaped by the lessons we draw from the day's message.
 - That message also influences our ordinary actions.

- On Yud-Tes Kislev, we increase in action specifically in the areas where the Alter Rebbe had *mesirus nefesh*.
 - His whole life was one of *mesirus nefesh*, yet certain areas stand out.

To identify which aspect we should learn from, we look at the first words the Alter Rebbe wrote upon leaving prison:

- The Alter Rebbe wrote: “As I was reciting in Tehillim the *possuk* ‘*Padah*



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b'shalom nafshi?... I was redeemed in peace (*b'shalom*) by the G-d of peace.”

- He mentions the idea of *shalom* several times.
- The question: of all Torah's themes, why connect his *geulah* specifically with *shalom*?
 - It does not appear at the top of the list of all the—
 - 613 mitzvos,
 - 13 *ikrim*,
 - 3 general *ikrim*.
- A seemingly more fitting choice would have been the first of the *Aseres Hadibros*—*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*!

For someone who represented the entire Jewish people, imprisoned for spreading *Yiddishkeit*, one would expect his *geulah* to be tied to a fundamental precept of Torah. Why then is it associated specifically with *shalom*?

2. Torah is shalom

[39:15]

The Rebbe explains that in truth, shalom is indeed a fundamental aspect of Torah, as in the meaning behind the dibbur of Anochi Hashem Elokecha.

Let's examine the opening of the *Aseres Hadibros*:

- Why begin with Hashem taking us out of Mitzrayim, and not “I am Hashem who created heaven and earth”?
- The point is to show how Hashem unites opposites—*chibur hafachim*, an expression of His unity:
 - On the one hand, we have “*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*,” from which we learn of Hashem's unity,
 - Another source for Hashem's oneness in the *possuk* *Shema Yisrael*
 - and in the very same *dibbur*, the opposite: Mitzrayim.
 - If He had opened with “who created heaven and earth,” *chibur hafachim* would not be emphasized.
 - Specifically taking us out of Mitzrayim, the lowest of all the nations, brings out this point.
- Uniting “*Anochi*” and “*Mitzrayim*” in the same *dibbur* emphasizes how Hashem brings together opposites.
 - Rashi explains that the connection is not incidental: the purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim (“*hotzeisicha*”) was that we

THE FIRST LETTER

Where should we look for inspiration and meaning in celebrating Yud-Tes Kislev? The Rebbe points us to the Alter Rebbe himself, by examining how he understood the significance of the *geulah*.

Among the Alter Rebbe's own writings, special attention is given to the two letters he penned immediately upon his return from Petersburg. The first, beginning with *Katonti*, was an open letter to all Chassidim and is printed in *Igeres HaKodesh* of Tanya. The second, the focus of this *sicha*, was addressed to Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, where he concludes with the personal account of his release while reciting Tehillim.⁸

should serve Hashem (“*anochi*”).

- So, the first *dibbur* highlights *shalom*—Hashem's unity expressed by joining opposites.
 - The first *dibbur* includes the entire Torah.
- When Mitzrayim is transformed, not by war but by being made holy,
- that is the ultimate expression of Hashem's *achdus* in a way of *shalom*: peace achieved by uniting opposites.

This is further illustrated in the difference between a *baal teshuvah* and a *tzaddik*:

- A *tzaddik* has never been tested by the world; we do not know how he would respond.
- A *baal teshuvah* has faced temptation and resisted. He creates *shalom* between Hashem's will and the world.

3. The Purpose of Galus

[44:58]

Continuing the theme of shalom and its centrality.

To connect this with the Alter Rebbe's *geulah*, first—

- Regarding *galus*, the question arises—
 - about *galus* Mitzrayim,
 - and each Jew's individual *galus*, the *neschama*'s descent from the highest heights down into this world...
 - There are two paths: one can destroy the enemy, or transform it—the idea of *pada b'shalom*.
- Why did Hashem create this situation of *galus*?



- The answer lies in the first *dibbur*: “*Anochi... asher hotzeisicha*”—to transform Mitzrayim.
- Into the lowliest nation, the Jewish people and Hashem Himself were in *galus*,
- in order to bring the *Anochi* there—the ultimate expression of unity.
- This was seen at the time of *Matan Torah*, when Hashem’s voice reached every corner of the world. Every creation was permeated with “*Anochi*”.
 - This explains the lack of an echo at *Matan Torah*—seemingly an unnecessary miracle.
 - What causes an echo? Sound being met with resistance from an object.
 - Whoever—and whatever—heard Hashem’s voice immediately became one with it, part of the unity of *Anochi*. There was nothing to deflect the sounds; all of creation simply absorbed them.
- For this purpose, a *neshama* is sent into *galus* in this world:
- The lowest world is created so the *neshama* can be sent there and express Hashem’s Oneness,
- which, before this world’s creation, was only potential. Our *avoda* makes it an actuality, by being a physical creation and knowing Hashem.

The purpose of galus is to bring about shalom: transforming Mitzrayim, our nefesh habehamis, and the world into good.

4. Don’t Destroy, Build!

[51:10]

Rather than “fighting” the world, we peacefully transform it. This *shalom* is represented in many ways.

The Beis Hamikdash:

- We build the world into a home for Hashem,
- using the physical elements of the world, just as the Mishkan was built from physical items saved from Mitzrayim, and its walls were built from trees planted there.
- This is the ultimate *shalom*: uniting the physical and spiritual.

Torah:

SHALOM, THE THIRD WAY

In a situation of *milchama*, two sides battle for the upper hand. The *nefesh haElohis* and *nefesh haBehamis* fight for control over the body, and only one will emerge victorious.

In a “war of *shalom*,” both sides are uplifted into a new, peaceful state. Rather than remaining two opposing sides, they become united into one, a third dimension, working in unison to serve Hashem. That is ultimate *shalom* and a true expression of *achdus Hashem*.⁹

- Brings about *shalom*.
 - even if one is not yet learning *lishma*.

The Alter Rebbe’s *geulah*:

- As he writes,¹⁰ it affected even the non-Jews [emphasizing *shalom* between all.]

Korbanos:

- The *shlamim* was so named for the peace it brought between Hashem and the world, and between people.

On an individual level:

- Uniting every moment in service of Hashem—personal *shalom* and *shleimus*.
- Uniting with fellow Jews.

The ultimate *shalom*:

- Peace between heaven and earth, physical and spiritual.
- The *geulah* which will bring peace.

1. The most famous example is that of Reb Nochum, son of the Mittlerer Rebbe. See “In the footsteps of Chassidim” in this issue.

2. Hilchos Teshuvah, 7:3.

3. See sourcesheet, sources 5–7.

4. *Shu”t min hashamayim, siman 5*.

5. See sourcesheet, sources 1–3.

6. Eruvin, 53b–54a. See sourcesheet source 8.

7. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz vol. 4, p. 264.

8. Igros Kodesh of the Alter Rebbe, *igeres 59*. See sourcesheet, source 11.

9. See sourcesheet, sources 9–11.

10. Igros Kodesh of the Alter Rebbe, *igeres 59*. See sourcesheet, source 11.