



לעבן מיט'ן רבי'ן



לזכות החיילת בצבאות ה'
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פעוונגער

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A FARBRENGEN IN THE "SHALASH".

First Encounters

ELUL 5717*



We present the following account of Elul 5717* with the Rebbe as described in letters written by Reb Yitzchok ("Itchke") Gansburg to his family back home in Eretz Yisroel. A young and energetic Russian immigrant, Reb Itchke worked for Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchok, Chabad's educational network in Eretz Yisroel. This was his first visit to the Rebbe.

His account of the subsequent Aseres Yemei Teshuva was featured in the Tishrei 5778 Derher, and a transcript of his *yechidus* was included in the Elul 5778 Derher.



FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE REBBE

FRIDAY, 24 ELUL

It's 4:30 p.m. here, 10:30 for you in Eretz Yisroel.

I thank Hashem for all the good He has done for me, that He has brought me here.

Albeit lengthy, the trip went smoothly, with no hitches. We had an hour layover in Athens, after which we flew to Vienna. At 6:00 p.m. we left for Brussels, and stayed there until 2:00 a.m. We then switched to a much larger plane, in which we flew to Manchester. We arrived in New York at 4:30

p.m. In the airport we were met by my brother Tzvi [Heishke] as well as my brother-in-law Yoel Kahn, along with their wives.

I *chazzered* Chassidus four times throughout the trip to an audience of Shloime Rosenfeld and Moshe Cadaner. We also sang *niggunim*. As my father-in-law [Reb Refoel Nachman Kahn] likes to remark: “גע'חזר'ט חסידות איבער שטעט און שטעטליך” [Repeated Chassidus over many towns and villages]. Indeed, with the airplane flying at 267 miles per hour, and taking the four flights into account, many miles heard Chassidus...

I've already encountered the Rebbe face to face.

Have a good Shabbos and a *ksiva vachasima tova*.

MOTZEI SHABBOS

PARSHAS NITZAVIM-VAYELECH

I will continue from where I left off on Friday. As mentioned, we arrived in the United States at 4:30 p.m. With six other planes set to land, we circled for a while. After clearing customs (by the way, my suitcase wasn't opened) we walked out to a sunny afternoon. Following an emotional *shalom aleichem* with Tzvi and Yoel, we hopped into two taxis which took us to my dear brother's home.

Later, as I glanced toward 770 on my way to Yoel's house, I noticed the Rebbe walking towards the entrance. I was at a loss at what to do. Suddenly everyone was standing at attention, as soldiers before a king. Startled and confused, I debated whether I should nod my head or simply run away. In the end, I froze in my place. The Rebbe glanced at me, with a hint of a smile on his face.

The *mazkirus* office is located at the front right corner of the building. It was there that we met Leibel Groner and I handed him a letter to pass on to the Rebbe. (By the way, immediately upon arriving at my brother's house we notified Rabbi Hodakov, as is customary.) The office has tables piled high with letters and other things. On the left side of the building, a few steps into the hallway, is the *Kodesh Hakadashim* [the Rebbe's room]. Further down on the right side of the building is the shul, which is neat and well-kept. Next door to the shul is a smaller room filled with *sefarim*, a “*cheder sheini*” of sorts. I'm not yet sure what the other doors lead to.

On the left side of the hallway there's a stairway leading down to the “*shalash*” [Russian for “hut”], the modern day “Sukkas Dovid.” It seems to have

originally been a driveway, but has since been converted with a makeshift roof of wooden boards and a tarpaulin. Electricity has also been installed for this “hall.” At the far side stands a *bima* about three feet above the ground, upon which the Rebbe *farbrengs*. The place is lined with 10 large and sturdy tables and benches, where Chassidim sit, or, more accurately, stand and hang, as they watch the Rebbe's holy countenance.

For someone living overseas, it is a great thrill. We are not talking about *sefiros d'Atzilus* or *le'asid lavo*; rather, in this day and age, *Elokus melubash b'teva*. In a single moment one finds himself in the *Beis Hamikdash*, where he can observe Moshe Rabbeinu holding the *luchos* and peacefully serving his Creator.

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SHABBOS WITH THE REBBE

Upon returning to my brother's house we changed into Shabbos clothes and then headed to Mincha. I met many friends and acquaintances in shul, and we also got to see all the “*sefiros haelyonos*,” such as Reb Itche Goldin, Reb Yochanan Gordon, Rabbi Hodakov, and so on. I was glad to see *yungeleit* from Eretz Yisroel such as our cousin Boruch Sholom Kahn, Gershon Mendel Garelik, Itche Springer, and Sholom Feldman. I was especially elated to meet those whom we hadn't seen since leaving Russia, such as Berel Kabilaker's [Levertov] sons Sholom and Moshe. We grew up together in Moscow, yet I never knew them there. *Bli ayin hara* a nice crowd. I also met Reb Pinye Althaus. Despite having had two *yechidusen*, Reb Pinye hadn't yet managed to discuss Beit Sefer Lmelacha in Kfar Chabad with the Rebbe. Also, regards to my *shver* from Shmuel “*der shneider*” [Lyubashitzki] and Hendel Futerfas.

The Rebbe arrived to Mincha and walked to his place at the southeastern corner of the room. While he sits on an upholstered chair at a table near the



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southern wall, the Rebbe occasionally stands at the *stender* by the eastern wall. The Rebbe has two Siddur Torah Ohrs; he davens with one, and recites Mishnayos and *kaddish* with the other. On Shabbos the Rebbe recited *kaddish*, I don't yet know for whom.¹

Outwardly, nothing about the Rebbe's davening sticks out, aside for the fact that every word is recited from the *siddur*. The Rebbe bows only slightly at the set places in *shemone esrei*, as well as "*Oseh shalom*." The Rebbe's holy face, his shining countenance, and most significantly, his gaze, cast

awe upon all present. Once in a while the Rebbe will raise his eyebrows, only intensifying the feeling.

When the Rebbe recites *kaddish*, all the other *chiyuvim* remain silent. As in *shemone esrei*, the Rebbe moves his head only slightly at “*Oseh shalom.*” The words “חיים טובים עלינו” are emphasized with the age-old *Chassidische nusach*. His backward steps are relatively large. Then, only after waiting for all the *chiyuvim* to finish *kaddish*, does the Rebbe conclude the Mishnayos in a tune of study, and recites Kaddish D’Rabbanan. The *chiyuvim* then follow.

At davening’s conclusion a wide path is cleared, and the Rebbe, *sefarim* in hand, heads to his room.

A *bochur* then *chazzered* the *maamar* that was said the previous Shabbos, Chai Elul.

A short while later, a hush descended upon the shul as the Rebbe returned for Kabbalas Shabbos. On cue, Reb Itche Churgin passionately began “*Lechu Neranena.*” The Rebbe noticeably makes sure that people shouldn’t see anything extraordinary. After davening, the Rebbe turns to every direction with a “*Gut Shabbos*” and then proceeds to his room.

We then head to my brother’s home for *seudas Shabbos*.

Tehillim began at 8:30 on Shabbos morning. From my vantage point I was able to see that the Rebbe was reciting Tehillim from a Yahel Ohr, while an Ohel Yosef Yitzchok was open to the “*Yehi Ratzon.*” Each *sefer* was followed by *kaddish*, first by the Rebbe and then the other *chiyuvim*. After Tehillim the Rebbe made a brief visit to his room, and returned in a tallis, carrying four *sefarim*, including a Tanya.

Again I noticed that the Rebbe recites everything from the *siddur*, and relatively fast. In addition to davening with the *minyan*, the Rebbe also managed to learn from the Tanya several times.

During *krias haTorah* (the *baal koreh* is Reb Mottel Schusterman), the Rebbe followed along in a Chumash while standing in his place. I was not near the Rebbe for most of *krias haTorah*, opting instead to remain near the *bima* so I could be close for Maftir, when the Rebbe is called to the Torah...

The Rebbe recited *birchas haTorah* without any special movements or gestures. He lifted the Torah slightly while grasping the *atzei chaim* with his bare hands.

After *hagba* the Rebbe waited until the Torah was covered before proceeding to chant *birchas haHaftarah* in a gentle singsong. *Possuk* by *possuk*,

the Rebbe enunciated the *haftarah*. His voice shifted to cries, and at times he disguised it by holding his breath.

FARBRENGEN!

Immediately after the *haftarah*, I rushed to the *shalash* to grab a spot for the farbrengen. My place, which I inherited from my brother Tzvi, is to the Rebbe’s left on the stage.

The hall quickly fills up. Many have fixed places and *chazakos*. Yoel has a secured spot on the floor. Some *anash* elders sit on the platform, while others stand. Rabbi Mentlik, who pours the wine from a covered bottle, is on the Rebbe’s right, while Rabbi Hodakov is on his left. Reb Yossel Wineberg and many others are behind him. A special chair is set up for Rashag at the end of the table to the Rebbe’s right. The room is full to capacity.

A lot of wine and *mezonos* is brought and paper cups are distributed. All of a sudden, a hush descends upon the crowd. At exactly 1:00 the Rebbe appears, carrying his *siddur*. The table, covered with two large tablecloths and another smaller one, is set with a silver becher (facing down), a covered plate of cake, and a pile of napkins. A watch is also placed on the table. After Rabbi Mentlik fills the *becher*, the Rebbe silently recites *kiddush*.

After *kiddush*, the Rebbe turned to the assembled with a smile on his face, and exclaimed: “Nu, you’ve already made *kiddush*. Say *lchaim.*” As the entire room begins to say “*lchaim,*” the Rebbe nods “*lchaim v’livracha,*” in every direction.

Sitting slightly hunched, the Rebbe proceeded to address the gathering. The crowd then sang some *niggunim* and said more *lchaims*. The Rebbe also drank a bit from his *becher*, after which he continued speaking.

The Rebbe then signalled for the *hachana niggun* to be sung, upon which the entire crowd rose to their feet. The *maamar*, beginning with the words לך אמר לבי בקשו פניי² lasted for a while. It was a *hemshech* of the *maamar* of the previous Shabbos. Throughout the *maamar*, the Rebbe had a tense look on his face, coughed several times to clear his throat, and even burst into tears.

Toward the *maamar*’s end the Rebbe wept profusely, taking out his handkerchief to wipe away tears. The crying is really wondrous, and takes place in the least expected parts of the *maamar*. For example, upon concluding the *maamar* with ישמח

His ordinary behavior is a mere perception. Only his body is with us; his neshama transcends time and space.

ישראל בעושי³ and 'שמח ה' במעשיו' the Rebbe's voice choked with tears.

Here you are, observing a man like all others, sitting and speaking; smiling and crying; eating and drinking; standing and walking. Yet at the same time, he isn't really here. The Rebbe is in *olaomos elyonim*, in *Atzilus* and even higher, united with *Elokus*. His ordinary behavior is a mere perception. Only his body is with us; his *neshama* transcends time and space. The Rebbe hears the word of Hashem and knows *daas Elyon*.

After reciting the *maamar* with his eyes closed, the Rebbe opens them up and turns to every direction with a smile on his face, as if to convey, "Say *l'chaim*." The Chassidim rush to fulfill his

desire, as though they want to restore the joyous aura after such a serious *maamar*. Upon starting a *freiliche niggun*, however, the attendees realize that it is the Rebbe who is energizing the crowd, suddenly motioning to intensify the singing and glee. The Rebbe taps on the table, but not in the usual fashion; it is absolutely sublime! The Chassidim maintain the rapid, boisterous song, it's as if the walls of the room and the entire hall are dancing along. All the while, the Rebbe encourages the singing ever more!

Then comes another *sicha*, more singing, and *l'chaim*. At times, after surveying the entire crowd, the Rebbe will proceed to single someone out to come up and say *l'chaim*. At this particular *farbrengen* the Rebbe summoned two *mechutanim* who were soon marrying off their respective children. When they brought a bottle to the Rebbe, he poured some into his own cup, and then instructed for the remainder to be distributed to the entire crowd. After pouring some *l'chaim* on the



A FARBRENGEN IN THE "SHALASH", 21 TAMMUZ 5721*.

stage, one of them gave the bottle to someone else to dispense. The Rebbe was not pleased with this, and stated in a tune of objection: “I said *you* should give it out, why are you passing it to someone else?!”

The Rebbe then told Reb Pinye Althaus: “Sing *mizimras ha'aretz*.” To which he replied, “I don’t know *niggunim* from the ‘*aretz*,’ I only know from Lubavitch.” When the Rebbe replied: “Nu!” Reb Pinye began singing “*Tik’eu Bachodesh Shofar*.” Afterwards, the Rebbe filled a small cup with wine and handed it to Pinye’s son, who was standing on his left, instructing him to “give it to your father so that he says *l’chaim*.” Upon seeing this, Reb Pinye proclaimed: “I want to receive without *memutza’im* [intermediaries],” to which the Rebbe smiled and responded something that I didn’t manage to catch. After Reb Pinye said *l’chaim*, the Rebbe handed him some *mezonos*.

The Rebbe then announced that all those who were not here last Shabbos will receive *l’chaim* from his cup. Upon seeing me approach with a small cup

the Rebbe exclaimed (these were the Rebbe’s first words to me): “Why a small cup? Take a large one!” I switched to a large cup and said “*l’chaim*,” to which the Rebbe responded “*l’chaim v’livracha*.”

Reb ... who was also standing on the stage, said a lot of *l’chaim* and was extremely inebriated. He pushed me off the platform. Although this happened near the Rebbe, it wasn’t in his view. I later noticed that the Rebbe did not respond to his *l’chaim*.

In the following *sicha*, the Rebbe discussed those who traveled from afar, entailing *mesiras nefesh* in body and soul, as well as monetarily. “For this they deserve medals of glass, marble, wood, iron, copper, silver, precious stones, and more and more.” (The Rebbe smiled as he said this.) “Nevertheless,” the Rebbe continued, “they should know that despite all the hassle, they must still keep their *shiurim*.” The Rebbe added that special *shiurim* should be given for women, and that they should hold a *farbrenge*n



before Rosh Hashanah, in order to link the past and coming years.

“*Asader Lseudasa*” and “*Bnei Heichala*” were sung, after which the Rebbe recited the *bracha acharona*, rose from his place, and left. Mincha immediately took place in the upstairs shul. I was called up to the Torah and *bentched* “*Hagomel*.”

Following Mincha, everyone returns to the *shalash*, where, along with many *bochurim*, Yoel begins to *chazzer* the *maamar* and piece everything together.



RABBI YOSEF GOLDSTEIN



RABBI YOSEF GOLDSTEIN

THE REBBE DAVENS IN THE UPSTAIRS SHUL OF 770, CIRCA 5721*.

SLICHOS

Slichos took place at 1:00 a.m. Before Slichos a meeting of Tzach’s administration took place in Beis Rivka. About 20 people, including me, participated. However, there isn’t anything noteworthy to repeat. Reb Dovid Raskin is in charge, and he really *kochs* in this.

Slichos were recited in the Sukkah [Shalash], and were led by Reb Shmuel Zalmanov. The Rebbe stood in the southeastern corner surrounded by tables protecting his place.

A massive crowd was in attendance.

At Shacharis the following morning I met several people, and now had the opportunity to converse with more of our acquaintances.

The Rebbe does not attend Shacharis on a regular weekday. When I saw Rabbi Hodakov in the *mazkirus* office I asked him about *yechidus*, to which he replied that he’s still awaiting specific instructions. The *mazkirus* office is open, and anyone can walk inside. While there, I also saw Mr. Quint. A bespectacled man of about 50 years old, he’s short and beardless. He seemed very preoccupied with his work.

The following morning, I recited Slichos at 7:00 a.m. in the Rebbe’s minyan. Reb Zalman Duchman was *chazzan*, and it seemed that the Rebbe had to wait for him...

At the end of davening, I returned home to finish the letter, and then visited Yoel. I used this opportunity to get copies of many *sichos* and *maamarim* from him, which I will *im yirtze Hashem* bring to Eretz Yisroel.

They say that the Rebbe visited the Ohel today, from twelve until six. At 10:00 p.m. I travelled together with Tzvi and his wife, in Reb Mottel Dubinsky’s car, to the women’s convention that the Rebbe had called for on Shabbos. They called it a “meeting” and I was the guest speaker. About a hundred women attended. In my address I discussed the Rebbe’s influence in Eretz Yisroel, and they say I did “alright...” **1**

1. The Rebbe would recite *kaddish* on 25 Elul. It is unknown for whom.
2. Tehillim 27:8. (From “לדוד ה'אורי,” recited daily from Rosh Chodesh Elul through Hoshana Rabba.)
3. Tehillim 149:2. Quoted in Tanya perek 33.
4. Tehillim 104:31.