



HISVADUS CHASSIDIM

כ"ז אדר-ראשון, תשנ"ב



לזכות
החיילת בצבאות ה'
שיינא צילה תחי'
לרגל הולדתה עשרה בטבת ה'תשפ"ב

נדפס ע"י הוריה
הרה"ת ר' שלום דובער זוגתו מרת ריקל
ומשפחתם שיחיו
פעוונגער
שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר - קיימן איילענדס



Thirty years ago, the Jewish world, and especially Lubavitcher Chassidim, received a devastating blow. On Chof-Zayin Adar 5752*, the Rebbe had a stroke while standing at the Ohel and no longer spoke *sichos* and *maamarim* to a world desperately thirsting for the *maayanos* of Chassidus and the clear authoritative direction the Rebbe always gave.

In the years since, Chassidim have stayed true to the Rebbe's mission and kept our *emunah* in the Rebbe's words repeated so many times in those final months before the stroke, that the coming of Moshiach is literally at our doorstep. It remains up to us to only finish the last few tasks and make the *geulah* physical reality.

To gain some insight and inspiration to continue our work, and to hear a little more about the feelings of Chassidim at the time before and after Chof-Zayin Adar, we sat down with two Chassidim, both of whom served as *chozrim* of the Rebbe during that period, to share some thoughts with our readers.

A farbrengen with **Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Jacobson** of Monsey, NY, and **Rabbi Avrohom Mann** of Toronto, Canada.

REFLECTING ON THE REBBE'S SICHOS OF WINTER 5752



Rabbi YOSEF YITZCHAK JACOBSON
 Monsey, NY,

Rabbi Jacobson, please share some background information about how you got involved in the *chazara* process in the later years, and what was your role in it during the months leading up to Chof-Zayin Adar:

I was born in Sivan 5732*, so in the months before Chof-Zayin Adar I was 19 years old.

The way I got started with *chazara* was as follows: My brother Reb Simon was doing *chazara* since 5737*, and he brought me in to help some years later. The truth is that I did my first *chazara* already as a very young child, even before my bar mitzvah. I remember one year, Reb Mendel Futerfas asked me to review the Rebbe's *sichos* on the nights of Sukkos for him, and that's how I got started.

As I got older, I started helping my brother with his job doing *chazara*. Publicly, I started doing *chazara* in 5750*. It was Shabbos Parshas Bo, Yud Shevat, 5750*, when the Rebbe celebrated 40 years since Yud Shevat. At the Shabbos farbrengen, the Rebbe requested that in honor of this milestone of “*arbaim shana*,” everyone should establish a new “*mosad*.” Rabbi Menachem Gerlitzky approached me on Motzei Shabbos after the Rebbe finished Maariv, and asked, “Nu, what's your new *mosad*?” I replied that I'm a young *bochur* and I don't think the Rebbe meant that even I was supposed to establish a *mosad*. I am learning in yeshiva and that is my “job.”

He insisted that if a *bochur* had the opportunity to open a *mosad* it was his duty. He suggested that I should

start doing *chazara* every Motzei Shabbos on the hook up, this way people all around the world could tune in and hear the Rebbe's farbrengen fresh—immediately after Shabbos, by calling in the WLCC hook-up lines. With that, he schlepped me over to WLCC and informed Reb Chaim Boruch Halberstam and Reb Yonasan Hackner that I would be doing *chazara* every week on the telephone from now on. Indeed, many communities of *anash* around the world would call in and listen to my *chazara*, including Kfar Chabad, Yerushalayim, Miami, Montreal and other places.

In the last few months before Chof-Zayin Adar, the Rebbe delivered many sichos, even more than usual for those years. What comes to mind as some of the themes the Rebbe

touched upon in those sichos?

In the last few months, a major theme emphasized by the Rebbe time and again, that I remember, is the concept of “*achdus*.” Firstly, the tremendous *achdus* that every Yid has with Hashem and with other Yidden. During those months the Rebbe also spoke about the infinite greatness and limitless holiness of each and every Jew in ways that he never did before, to my knowledge. The Rebbe also spoke about the unique qualities of the *Yiddishe guf* in extraordinary ways — explaining how the body of a Jew embodies the deepest core essence of Hashem. The Rebbe was revealing how every *Yiddishe neshama* and every *Yiddishe guf* are completely beyond darkness and toxicity.

The Rebbe also spoke a lot about the *achdus* of the “*yesh hanivra*”— the material created reality, with the *Yesh Ha’amiti*, the One and true reality (the Creator Himself). The Rebbe elaborated on the intrinsic connection between the physical body and *Atzmus* (Hashem’s very essence), and in general, the unification of the world and Hashem in the most amazing of ways.

Basically, the Rebbe was introducing the concept of *geulah*—a world of absolute oneness. A world where there is no external or internal conflict; a reality in which you realize that the *yetzer hara* is just waiting for transformation. No person will feel horrible about himself or distant. None of that.

The Rebbe, it seems to me, was teaching us how to live right now with a *geulah* consciousness, in a *geulah* world. A *geulah* world is a reality where a person’s consciousness is one with Hashem, and in which I see myself as an ambassador of infinity. I am never part of the problem, I am part of the solution. I am not a victim of *galus*, I am the



RABBI YOSEF YITZCHOK JACOBSON ALONGSIDE HIS FATHER REB GERSHON JACOBSON DURING KOS SHEL BRACHA ON MOTZEI ACHARON SHEL PESACH 5748*.

solution to bring *geulah* into *galus*.

The Rebbe also spoke often how history has reached a new era — where the light of the *geulah* is already present, and we need to open our eyes to a new reality and a new *avodah*.

Not many understood what the Rebbe meant, but it was clear that the Rebbe was speaking in a way that was different than in earlier years.

What was unique about the Shabbos farbrengens at that time? Did they differ from previous years?

The Shabbos farbrengens in the last few years changed dramatically.

In the previous years, the Rebbe’s farbrengens had a much clearer structure: Each *sicha* would start with one particular point, a *nekuda*, and then it would develop throughout the *sicha*.

In the last few years, starting with 5749*, it was harder to sense the structure; each *sicha* seemed to be comprised of many various *nekudos*. The Rebbe might start a *sicha* talking about the *parsha* of the week, and then immediately launch into heartfelt *brachos* for the imminent coming of Moshiach, and then go on to something else entirely. In one *sicha*, the Rebbe could cover 100 brief points.

Additionally, the Rebbe spoke much more concisely, to the point that it was often difficult to grasp the ideas he was saying because the Rebbe would not elaborate, and he would just say, “as discussed in previous years,” or “in the previous farbrengen.”

In previous years, there was a very clear structure to each *sicha*, and there was also a fairly predictable structure to the whole farbrengen. The first two *sichos* were usually on the theme of the week, like the *parsha*, a holiday, an upcoming special day, etc. Then there was a *maamar* (usually a *maamar ke’ein sicha*). Then there was the Rashi *sicha* — questions on a Rashi from that week’s *parsha*, questions on the Rebbe’s father’s notes to the Zohar, Pirkei Avos (in the summer), and in the later years, on the daily Rambam as well. After laying out all these questions the Rebbe would usually give out *mashke* to people making events. Then the Rebbe would answer all the questions from the previous *sichos*. Occasionally, there may have been an additional *sicha* with a timely *hora’a*; like to prepare for the summer by ensuring that all kids are enrolled in proper camps, or to prepare for an upcoming Yom Tov by arranging all the *mitvzoim* needs, and so on.

But in the later years, that structure

no longer existed. The Rebbe also stopped saying *maamarim* (besides a few exceptions), and stopped giving Rashi *sichos* and Zohar *sichos*.

Can you describe the sense of anticipation for the *geulah* that built up over the years?

Indeed, there was tremendous anticipation. The expressions the Rebbe used about the imminence of the *geulah* were very intense, very powerful. These were words we never heard before. There is no question that there was tremendous anticipation for the coming of Moshiach, especially amongst the *bochurim* who were immersed in the *sichos*.

Can you talk a little bit about the Rebbe's health at the time, leading up to Chof-Zayin Adar?

While all this was going on, together with the great excitement about the coming of Moshiach, we also observed things the Rebbe did that year that were different.

We all know the Rebbe's famous *sicha* on Gimmel Shevat, about the fact that the Friediker Rebbe suffered in his last years from deteriorating health, most significantly debilitated speech.

I remember standing next to my friend Shaul Vishedsky after that *sicha*, and noting that "this is scary." Nobody actually thought that the Rebbe was intimating, *chas v'shalom*, something that was about to happen. But it was nevertheless very strange that the Rebbe would talk about this subject on a random day.

The truth is, looking back now, there were other hints in the Rebbe's *sichos* of that time. For example, on Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe spoke about the special connection between the Tzemach Tzedek and his son, the Rebbe Maharash, both of whom passed away on the 13th of the month—the Tzemach Tzedek on

Yud-Gimmel Nissan and the Rebbe Maharash on Yud-Gimmel Tishrei. The Rebbe explained that the Tzemach Tzedek to some degree appointed the Rebbe Maharash to be his successor, because he knew that it is possible that the coming of Moshiach wouldn't materialize and there would be "אל עפר תשוב"—the *histalkus*.¹

At the same farbrengen, the Rebbe quoted the words in Shulchan Aruch that a person should blow the shofar "עד שיאדימו פני התוקע"—until his face turns red. Why does this occur? Through the intense effort in blowing the shofar, blood rises to the face of the blower. But then the Rebbe added: When the blood flows through, it should, *chas v'shalom*, not diminish the health of the blower at all; on the contrary, his health will only get better in the process!²

The Rebbe was basically describing the process of a stroke.

Then on the first day of Sukkos, the Rebbe stood for more than six hours, watching every Chossid come by and shake his lulav and esrog. I will never forget the seriousness on the Rebbe's face at that occasion. In retrospect it seemed to me that the Rebbe was saying goodbye to each and every one and filling us up with energy and *kochos* to not only endure but to grow

and prosper and change the world!

Shemini Atzeres night, the Rebbe suddenly said a *sicha* after Maariv. Going through each letter of the Aleph-Beis, the Rebbe gave *brachos* for the upcoming year, and when he reached the letter Pei, he said—a year of "פדיה"—redemption, especially in the realm of reciting Torah with the "פה"—the mouth.³ This was a highly unusual term for the Rebbe to use.

Again, no one predicted that something undesirable was going to happen. But later in the year, after Chof-Zayin Adar, we started seeing things in this perspective.

Another incredible *sicha* that comes to mind was said the night before, on Hoshana Rabba 5752*. The Rebbe said that the title "אדמו"ר" which is usually only reserved for a Rebbe has now become accessible for each and every Jew! The Rebbe's words were shocking. In fact, the Rebbe himself said that this is a shocking concept. Yet we say in davening on Yom Tov, "ויתקיים בנו מקרא שכתוב"—that the words of the *possuk* which is stated about Moshiach should be fulfilled in each and every one of us.⁴

All these years later we go back and realize that perhaps the Rebbe was empowering each and every one of us to become a conduit for



the Rebbe — that from now on the light and love of the Rebbe should shine through each and every Chossid in his and her daily life.

Of course, I recall Shabbos Parshas Noach when the Rebbe suddenly declared seven times “*Hashem Hu Ha'Elokim*,” like at the end of Yom Kippur. This too was very unusual. I do not think it ever happened before, as far as I know.

I also recall that in 5752* the Rebbe mentioned a story about Reb Hillel Paritcher twice. It happened once that there was no visible moon, and he asked the Tzemach Tzedek for a blessing that the moon should appear for him to do Kiddush Levanah. He later said that now in his older age had the moon not come out, he would have not survived!

It was strange that the Rebbe shared this story, and twice, in Tishrei and Cheshvan 5752*. But later I learnt that in Adar I of that year the moon did not come out in time for the Rebbe to do Kiddush Levanah.

It is above my capacity to understand what all this means. I am just sharing some things we spoke about at the time.

Was there a unique theme in the sichos through the month of Adar I?

Yes, there was a tremendous focus on the fact that the month of Adar is referred to as a time when “*bari mazlei*”—the fortune of the Yidden is stronger. The Rebbe repeated this theme, elaborating on the importance that a Yid should always be healthy, both in *guf* and in *neschama*. The Rebbe also spoke about living with *harchavah*, with vastness and a broad mind; that Yidden should be rich, both spiritually and even materially. It fit right into the theme of the *geulah* consciousness. Living in a mindset and in a world where heaven and earth converge, where

spiritual abundance and physical abundance are all one. The Rebbe also spoke about *bittul b'shishim*; that with 60 days of Adar this year, all the undesirable things are nullified.

The Rebbe generally spoke amazingly about the virtue of the Jewish people, and how each Jew is higher than Torah. The Rebbe, in the second to last fabrenge, presented a sweeping *sicha* about the entire journey of Jewish history, and how even the sins of the Jewish people were somehow part of the plan.

When these various points were mentioned in the sichos again and again, what feelings did they arouse? Fear? Excitement? Joy?

Yes, there was excitement, there was joy.

But truthfully, as *bochurim*, and even myself who was involved in listening to the Rebbe and doing *chazara* afterwards, we didn't really understand the full depth of what the Rebbe was saying.

But it was very uplifting. The Rebbe's words brought tremendous excitement.

On the other hand, we saw that the Rebbe was physically weaker. The way the Rebbe walked, the way he spoke, we could see that the Rebbe's health was declining.

I remember this one incident very well: One evening, my father wasn't well and I went to Rabbi Leibel Groner's office to ask him to notify the Rebbe and ask for a *bracha*. I happened to be standing there when the Rebbe came back from the Ohel and walked into his room through Rabbi Groner's office. It was, for me, a scary sight to see. The Rebbe was completely hunched over, walking very, very slowly, the likes of which I had never seen before. The Rebbe was holding the large brown bag, and he seemed so tired.



THE REBBE EXITS THE MIKVEH BUILDING ON UNION STREET DURING THE MONTH OF ADAR I 5752*.

And then, ten minutes later, the Rebbe came downstairs for Mincha and he was like a different person. The Rebbe was walking straight, encouraging the singing with his hand and generating such *simcha*. I was amazed: Privately the Rebbe seemed so tired, but when the Rebbe appeared in front of the Chassidim, even after fasting and standing all day on his feet, he walked like a king.

The last maamar that the Rebbe gave out was Ve'ata Tzeaveh. Was there discussion about the uniqueness of this maamar and its application at the time when the Rebbe gave it out?

It was a new *maamar*, and like every new Torah that came out from the Rebbe, the guys learned it and discussed it. I don't recall that we sensed anything unique about it immediately at the time. Obviously, we all learned the *maamar*; it's a

very special *maamar*, discussing the depth of *emunah* and the role of a *nossi* in each generation.

I heard from Rabbi Chaim Shaul Brook of Lahak Hanachos that after every *maamar* was published, he would write a *duch* to the Rebbe about where it was sent, how it was disseminated, etc. The answer to the *duch* about Ve'ata Tetzaveh was different than usual.

I also heard from Rabbi Chaim Baruch Halberstam of WLCC that when he wrote to the Rebbe about the hook-ups of the weekday *sichos* during the last month, he also received an answer that was different than usual.

Can you tell us about the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel, two days before Chof-Zayin Adar? What was unique about this farbrengen? Did you realize at the time that it was something special?

I will never forget Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel 5752*.

I kid you not, immediately after Shabbos I told a friend of mine that this farbrengen was different. In many ways, this last farbrengen reflected those of the earlier years.

Firstly, the Rebbe spoke much louder than usual. You could hear the Rebbe's voice even from far away.

Secondly, the first *sicha* was much longer than usual; it was close to an hour long. Also, the Rebbe explained the concepts with more *harchavah*, and there was a clear "*binyan*," a structure to the *sicha*.

This was a different type of farbrengen.

The first *sicha* was a *moiredike sicha*. I still remember as the Rebbe walked into the farbrengen, his opening words were: "אין יעדן ענין" אין יעדן ענין—In every area of Torah, there are many allusions (and lessons)." In many



THE REBBE SEEN WITH TWO KUNTREISIM OF THE MAAMAR "VE'ATA TETZAVEH" IN HIS SIDUR, PLACED THERE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE KUNTRES ON 14 ADAR I 5752*

years, the *parshios* of Vayakhel and Pekudei are read together in one week. The fact that the *parshios* are separated this year contains allusions and lessons for us: Namely, sometimes the community and the individual need to come together at the same time, but sometimes you need to stress the importance of the collective before you get to each individual.

The Rebbe explained this point at great length, and enumerated how it spells itself out in a person's own *avodah*, within himself, how it spells itself out in the *avodah* between one Yid and another, and how it applies to our *avodah* with the entire world around us.

There were many side points and anecdotes with beautiful *biurim* throughout the *sicha* as well. For example, I remember the Rebbe asking: Why do we start the day with the words "מוודה אני לפניך"? It would seem more sensible to say "אני—מוודה לפניך—I give thanks to you."

The Rebbe explained with an amazing *chiddush*: A Yid is always one with Hashem. Like the Rambam says in Hilchos Geirushin, deep down

every Yid always wants to do only what Hashem wants. It is only that sometimes the *yetzer hara* gets in the way and persuades the Yid to do what is not in his own best interest. But that's only during the day. At night, when a person is asleep, the *yetzer hara* is also asleep, so a Yid goes back to his natural state of only wishing to do what Hashem wants. So immediately when he wakes up, the first thing he says is "מוודה," he lays himself down before Hashem. The concept of "אני"—the "I" does not yet exist! A Yid is still in a state of oneness with Hashem!

Then the Rebbe concluded, and I'll never forget this, the Rebbe gave a scream: "ועוד והוא העיקר, איצטער איז דיי" צייט אויפכאפן זיך פון שלאף—Now is the time to wake up from our sleep..."

I remember that when I wrote up the *hanacha* of this farbrengen, even though I was writing in Lashon Hakodesh, I had to include many of the Yiddish expressions from the original. It was really a very, very special farbrengen.

The Rebbe also spoke about how none of the Chabad Rabbeim ever visited Eretz Yisroel. (Even the

Frierdiker Rebbe, the Rebbe said, went there simply because he could not go to the burial places of his predecessors in Russia.) This too was quite unusual.

Can you tell us a little bit about the day of Chof-Zayin Adar itself; where were you and what was going through your mind?

The truth is, I barely ever went by the Rebbe for dollars, but on that Sunday, 26 Adar I, I was scheduled to leave for Eretz Yisroel for a cousin's wedding, so I decided to go by and get the Rebbe's *bracha* before my trip.

I remember watching the Rebbe distribute the dollars and giving personal attention to each and every person; it was something I rarely, if ever, saw from up close. Right before my turn, I told Rabbi Leibel Groner that I was traveling to Eretz Yisroel that night. When my turn came, the Rebbe gave me a dollar, and wished me "*bracha* and *hatzlacha*." Reb Leibel told the Rebbe that I was leaving that night to Israel, and the Rebbe handed me a second dollar and said: "*Upgeben af tzedakah in Eretz Hakodesh*." Give it to *tzedakah* in the Holy Land.

By the time I passed by the Rebbe it was already close to the end of the distribution, 6:00 or 6:30 in the evening. Standing in line right before

me was a small girl who said, "Rebbe M'Lubavitch, I love you!" and the Rebbe broke out in an unbelievable smile, gave the girl an extra dollar, and said: "This is for your love..." (Today you can see this exchange on video.)

I flew out that Sunday after midnight, arrived in Eretz Yisroel Monday evening and went to Toras Emes in Yerushalayim. Having not slept all Motzei Shabbos due to my writing of the *farbrenge*, and not sleeping on the plane, I was exhausted and lay down to take a nap. Around midnight, someone woke me up and shared the news that the Rebbe fell at the Ohel. We immediately went to the Kosel to daven.

Did you suddenly come to the realization that the Rebbe was hinting at this occurrence all along?

No. Everyone was in total shock and startled. Our system was disrupted. The *bochurim* in 770 started to make rotations of groups to recite Tehillim throughout all 24 hours of the day in the *zal* upstairs. It was a very difficult time for us, very, very hard. No one saw the Rebbe again until Shavuos, but most of us only saw the Rebbe on Rosh Hashanah 5753*, more than half a year later. It was very hard.

The lives of all the *bochurim* were

put on hold. There were conflicting rumors coming out of the Rebbe's room, and truthfully, there was nobody to guide us or help any of us.

On Sukkos 5753*, the Rebbe was in the big shul again. I was standing right there, literally a few inches away from the Rebbe. The Rebbe's face was shining incredibly—it was something of another world! We sang some *niggunim* and then after about 20 minutes, they took the Rebbe back upstairs. We all said that's how the revelation of Moshiach is going to look like.

Interestingly, I was also there by the Pesach Seder in 5753*, when the Rebbe came out for *Shefoch Chamascha*. There were only a few people present at the time, and the Rebbe's face was very radiant; it was really something special. We began singing, and the Rebbe encouraged it with his left hand.

What is the message that you would like to relay that we can apply 30 years after the occurrence of Chof-Zayin Adar?

I think the Rebbe articulated the mandate of our generation, that every person should realize how powerful and connected they are, and how we are all completely one with Hashem. That all the darkness a person may feel is something external to their essence which is always wholesome and Divine.

Every person should realize that they are a *shliach* of Hashem, an ambassador of the infinite light of *geulah*. And even if you are dealing with pain and challenges, it is all really an "alarm clock" to wake you up and realize who we are: A manifestation of *Atzmus*, of Hashem's essence in the world. That you and I, and each of us, embody the deepest and most real connection possible.





THE TWO CONFLICTING APPROACHES



RABBI AVROHOM MANN

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A New Era

I came to be by the Rebbe on Erev Shabbos Hagadol 5749*. In 5752*, I was 21 years old and enjoying the best years of my life, basking in the Rebbe's holy presence and listening to the Rebbe's farbrengens each and every Shabbos.

The truth is that in a certain sense, the time that I came to the Rebbe was the start of a new era in the Rebbe's *sichos* in general. That first Shabbos I was in New York, the Rebbe gave a lengthy explanation on the meaning of Yud-Aleph Nissan, based on the significance of the number 11 according to Chassidus, and how it applies to revealing the *yechidah*—the deepest part of the *neschama*. This subject became a continued theme throughout the Rebbe's *sichos* in the following years, as the Rebbe applied it to Yud-Aleph Shevat as well (in 5750*), and also connected it with the Rebbetzin's *histalkus* on Chof-Beis Shevat (in 5752*)—since Chof-Beis is 11 times 2.

That year, the Rebbe edited the

*maamar B'yom Ashtei Assar Yom 5731**, which speaks about the wise man who chooses only the king himself, not being distracted by the various shiny objects (or personalities) in the king's court.

It seemed that from this point on, the Rebbe was sharing with unprecedented *osiyos* about how to connect with the Rebbe himself in a deeper, more profound way than ever before.

I remember that Yud-Aleph Nissan as being very, very special. Yud-Aleph occurred on a Motzei Shabbos, and the Rebbe was given the *bracha* on behalf of Chassidim in the big shul after Maariv. The Rebbe's face was shining brightly and the Chassidim responded with such an outpouring of love. When the Rebbe left the shul, we all started singing the new *niggun*, *Shir Mizmor*, and the Rebbe turned to all sides encouraging the singing and dancing. It was quite an unforgettable moment. (Today you can watch this event on video.)

It wasn't only our *bochurim* who

noticed this. My brother-in-law had brought a group of *baalei batim* from California to 770 that Shabbos, and one of them commented to him that on that night, he witnessed the great love between the Rebbe and Chassidim.

There were other very interesting changes at the time pertaining to Chassidim's connection with the Rebbe. There was a booklet that was published by the *bochurim* called "Beis Chayenu" about the goings-on in the Rebbe's presence, including summaries of the *sichos*, many details about what the Rebbe did throughout each day, etc. In previous years, no one would ever dream that the Rebbe would show any attention to a project of this sort. But then, in the period before Chof-Zayin Adar, the Rebbe was suddenly showing the editors of this booklet tremendous affection, even once writing to them, "כל המפרט ה'י"ז—משובח—The more details, the better..."

A friend of mine, Boruch Kahana, who was involved in this project, wrote to the Rebbe at

one point that he was thinking of stopping, because it seemed to be interfering with his learning. But the Rebbe wrote to him that he should continue. In previous years, no one would have imagined this type of encouragement from the Rebbe!

It is fascinating that at the same time the Rebbe was incessantly talking about the *geulah* and preparing us for its arrival, the Rebbe was also allowing us to connect with the Rebbe at a very personal level. Perhaps this is also connected with the Rebbe's emphasis on "*giluy hayechidah*," the revelation of the deepest part of the *neschama*.

This special era in the Rebbe's *sichos* continued to climb, bringing Chassidim to higher levels of consciousness as time went on.

The Rebbe was speaking so clearly about the *geulah* in ways that were never heard before and the atmosphere amongst Chassidim changed. For example: It was the longstanding practice for many years that when the Rebbe's Shabbos afternoon farbrengen began, after the Rebbe made *kiddush*, Chassidim would sing the *kapitel niggun* of that year. But in Nissan of 5751*, with all the anticipation for the *geulah*, we switched to "*Zol shoin zein di geulah...*" With time, one of the Chassidim, I think it was Reb Kutzy Rapp, changed the words to "*Es kumt*



RABBI AVROHOM MANN RECEIVING KOS SHEL BRACHA FROM THE REBBE ON MOTZEI ROSH HASHANAH 5751*.

shoin di geulah..." i.e. that Moshiach is already coming! It was a reflection of the way Chassidim felt at that time.

It's also noteworthy that throughout this period, the Rebbe had a strong *koch* in "*nissim*"—wonders and miracles. The Rebbe called upon us to implement *nissim* into our own *avodah* of Torah and mitzvos, doing more than our perceived capabilities, in a "*nissim*" spirit.⁵

Geulah At Our Doorstep

That final stretch leading up to Chof-Zayin Adar was really incredible. In fact, I had a family wedding in Eretz Yisroel that winter. I wrote to the Rebbe that I had permission from the *hanhalah* of the yeshiva to travel for it, and I'm asking for the Rebbe's *haskamah u'brachah*. The Rebbe responded by circling both parts of my letter, that I had permission, and *haskamah u'brachah* (i.e. because I had permission, the Rebbe was giving his consent and blessing), and added "*Azkir al haTziyun*."

So I left for Eretz Yisroel in the middle of Shevat. Then all of a sudden at the end of Shevat, I noticed that the Rebbe was starting to say *sichos* almost every night of the week! I

immediately changed my ticket and went back to New York right away to be with the Rebbe at this special time.

[An interesting side point:

I got back to New York on Erev Shabbos Parshas Teruma and wrote a *duch* to the Rebbe about my visit, including the fact that I visited various yeshivos in Eretz Yisroel and did *hafatzas hamaayanos*, etc. I also noted that I gifted *tzedakah pushkas* to my younger siblings, nieces and nephews.

The next day towards the beginning of the farbrengen, the Rebbe mentioned that for the building of the third *beis hamikdash*, children participated by contributing from their own personal money. The Rebbe added that this is especially applicable nowadays, when we educate our children to give *tzedakah* with their own money.

For a moment I thought that perhaps the Rebbe was giving me an answer to what I had written on my *duch*, about giving *pushkas* to my nieces and nephews. But then I dismissed that thought, casting doubt that the Rebbe would actually be addressing something I had written to him.

Obviously, I had never dreamed that the Rebbe was going to give me a written response to the *duch*, but a



THE ISSUE OF "BEIS CHAYENU" PUBLISHED IN THE DAYS AFTER 27 ADAR I 5752*.

few days later, Rabbi Groner told me that the Rebbe had written something on the note I had submitted!

The *duch* I gave had two pages. On the general content of the letter, the Rebbe wrote “יוסיף בבשו”ט והזמ”ג” ויוסיף כפליים אדר—May you increase in bearing good news; the time is appropriate, a double Adar...” And then on the first page, where I had written about the tzedakah *pushkas*, the Rebbe underlined that section, and placed an arrow pointing to it on the side, indicating that he especially appreciated that part. I then realized that it was indeed possible that the fact that the Rebbe started the farbrengen specifically with this point about children and tzedakah could have been in part because of what he read in my *duch*!]

I had the *zechus* in those years, together with my friend Efraim Mintz, to write up a “*taktzir*”—a summary of the Rebbe’s farbrengen each Shabbos right away on Motzei Shabbos. This way, Chassidim all around the world would have something fresh to learn immediately following Shabbos, right after the Rebbe said it. Our organization was called “Fax a Sicha.”

Fax a Sicha was *zocheh* that the Rebbe edited the summaries they prepared a few times. The first time was on Motzei Shabbos Parshas Vayera 5751*, shortly after we started writing them. To us, it seemed like the Rebbe

wanted to show his appreciation and encourage us in this new endeavor. A second time was Motzei Shabbos Parshas Vayeshev 5752*. Interestingly, the Rebbe had spoken that week about the spiritual revolution in France, and he had mentioned that in certain respects, Canada is also considered part of France, while some people actually want to make it a part of France again, etc. When we wrote this in our summary, the Rebbe added that “איני מתערב בפוליטיקה” —“I don’t get involved in politics. Hashem will certainly determine the best outcome based on the situation etc.” (I.e. since this issue of Canada being part of France is a hotly debated political issue, the Rebbe didn’t want to publicly comment on it.)

The third time was Motzei Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel, the last farbrengen before Chof-Zayin Adar.

Less than two months before Chof-Zayin Adar, the Rebbe said the famous *sicha* on Gimmel Shevat, about the Frieddiker Rebbe’s health and specifically his diminished speech which affected his work of *hafatzas hamaayanos*. The Rebbe spoke in a more serious tone and it seemed unusual for the Rebbe to be randomly talking about this subject. We sensed that it was very serious.

A month later, the tragic incident of Mrs. Lapine’s murder occurred in Crown Heights. The Rebbe said a heartrending *sicha* about her *mesiras nefesh*, and the *kiddush Hashem* that transpired, in the neighborhood of *nesi doreinu*. The Rebbe spoke with painful words about the fact that the *geulah* is still not here, and the shocking fact that we could be faced with such a devastating challenge, despite it being high-time for Moshiach to already be here. After Chof-Zayin Adar, we were able to apply these words to our situation and put them in perspective.

To some of us it felt as though the Rebbe was willing to give up even on his own *gezunt* with *mesiras nefesh* in order to bring the *geulah*.

The Rebbe also spoke so much about *bittul bshishim*, nullifying all the undesirable things with 60 days of *simcha* as this year was a leap year with two months of Adar. In response to a certain *duch*, the Rebbe wrote “להרבות בשמחה ובכפליים שישים יום. אזכיר” (“**Increase** in joy, with a double measure for sixty days. I will mention this at the *Tziyun*.”) A few Chassidim wrote to the Rebbe that they started having dancing every night in 770 as per the Rebbe’s answer, along with acts of Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilus chasadim*. The Rebbe gave them a very encouraging answer “תהא פעולה” (“May it be a continuous thing, and increase. I will mention this at the *Tziyun*.”)

The Devastating Blow

And then it happened. On Chof-Zayin Adar the Rebbe took ill. Obviously, the pain and the shock were indescribable. Nevertheless, the nightly dancing continued. Some people thought it was inappropriate; others thought that the *simcha* itself would bring the much needed *yeshua*. I remember specifically how one Chossid brought to our attention: Many times when there was a difficult situation in the past, the Rebbe always sought to avert it with intense *simcha*, like during the Yom Kippur War or when the Rebbe had a heart attack in 5738*. Now too, as difficult as it may be, the Rebbe would probably expect us to continue with the *simcha* as a means to overcome this challenging situation.

Of course, for us *bochurim*, whose whole lives revolved around the Rebbe, this occurrence was a devastating blow. Many of



THE REBBE ON THE MORNING OF 27 ADAR I 5752*.

the *bochurim* had a hard time concentrating on their learning and instead would say Tehillim non-stop. Obviously, we knew that the right thing was to continue our learning and that this was what the Rebbe wanted of us. But it was really very difficult. Our minds were preoccupied and our hearts were worried.

The situation continued but we kept our *emunah* strong. The truth is that throughout this entire period we had two contradicting feelings in our hearts: On the one hand, we felt broken about the Rebbe's situation and longed to see the Rebbe in his full strength again, but on the other, we knew that *geulah* was literally at hand and our anticipation was only growing with time.

A good illustration of these two opposing sentiments come to mind:

When I became a *chosson* on 9 Adar 5754*, I was one of the last people to be *zocheh* to receive the Rebbe's *bracha* with a nod of his holy head. My *l'chaim* took place a few days later, and present at the *l'chaim* was a family relative of ours who was a Chossid, but not a Lubavitcher. We began the evening by reciting Tehillim for the Rebbe, and this relative was surprised. "You say Tehillim at night?" he asked.⁶

He got two answers: Reb Yisroel Friedman, the *rosh yeshiva* of Oholei Torah said, "Nowadays, it is dark even during the day. So when should we say Tehillim?" And Reb Itche Springer said, "*Vos heist? It's yemos haMoshiach! It's a time when we are already experiencing a taste of Layla kayom ya'ir...*" (I.e. we're already experiencing the times of Moshiach and we don't have to worry about heavenly judgment at night). These two answers captured so well how everyone in the room was feeling.

The truth is that all Chassidim felt both of these points in their hearts. I remember a *farbrengen* with Reb Yisroel Friedman when he said a lot



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of *l'chaim*, and he shared with us a deeper part of himself. He said, "The Rebbe says its *yemos haMoshiach*, that we have already entered the time of Moshiach. I don't know exactly what that means, but one thing I'm certain is that when Moshiach comes, we will only experience '*lichtige teg*'—days that are completely illuminated. If so, we should apply the *halacha* that '*ossur lishon bayom*'⁷—it is forbidden to sleep during the day. If we are already in the days of Moshiach, we are not allowed to sleep anymore! *M'tur nit shlufen!*"

We really felt as if Moshiach was coming any moment. I know of a certain Chossid who lived in Crown Heights, who in the winter of 5754* was invited to serve as the *sandek* at the *bris* of his grandson overseas. He decided not to leave New York because he was sure that the *hisgalus* of Moshiach would happen while he was gone and he didn't want to miss it!

The Rebbe's Instructions

The *maamar Ve'ata Tetzaveh* was a very *geshmake maamar* which the Rebbe distributed; it talks about Moshiach and how we have to really want the *geulah* with true feeling, etc. But then after Chof-Zayin Adar, it took on a whole new meaning. The

Rebbe says that we can scream "*ad mosai*" because we feel pained by the hardships of *galus*, or we can really connect with the need for *geulah*, even "*mitoch harchava*," even when everything seems to be going well, both *b'gashmius* and *b'ruchnius*.

Perhaps the Rebbe was hoping to teach us to scream "*ad mosai*" right then, while things were still relatively good, before Chof-Zayin Adar, but unfortunately that didn't happen. When the Rebbe received the *duch* about the dissemination of the *maamar*, he wrote, "ויה"ר שיפעול פעולה"—הרצויה—It should have the desired effect..." What the Rebbe meant exactly, we obviously don't know. But perhaps the Rebbe was implying that it should have the desired effect and avoid the tragic occurrence of Chof-Zayin Adar a few days later.

I want to conclude with a *vort* about the last *farbrengen* before Chof-Zayin Adar, on Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel:

That week, my friend Efraim Mintz had broken his leg and so he was not able to stand in his usual place close to the Rebbe. The responsibility of *chazara* and writing up the "*taktzir*" was solely on me. I stood right in front of the Rebbe, on the floor, probably on top of a little box or something.

The Rebbe spoke with much more



JEM100808, VIA CHAIM BARUCH HALBERSTAM

REB BINYOMIN KLEIN OPENS THE CAR DOOR FOR THE REBBE IN THE DRIVEWAY OF THE REBBE'S HOME. CIRCA 5748*

explanation than usual. It was very *geshmak*. The bulk of the *sicha* was about *ahavas Yisroel* and the closeness to Moshiach's times; amazing things. The Rebbe mentioned that we are already seeing the prelude to the ingathering of the *galuyos* with mass emigration to Eretz Yisroel—something we had never heard before!

In that farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel, the Rebbe said that a person has to give everything he has for the sake of *ahavas Yisroel*. He quoted the *possuk* “לאיש יתן בעדו כל אשר נפש—Everything a person has, he should give for his soul...” meaning, that whatever a person has, he should give away for the sake of another Yid. And furthermore, said the Rebbe, not only whatever he possesses, but even his very “*nefesh*” itself.

An interesting vort from the Rebbe Rashab comes to mind. He says that when the Alter Rebbe went to prison, he was testing his Chassidim to see if they would maintain *ahavas Chassidim* through this difficult challenge. The Rebbe Rashab added that he looked through various *sefarim* to see if there's a “*hetter*” to do something like that.

Perhaps the Rebbe was hinting that, like the Alter Rebbe, the challenges that we were about to experience

which were connected to the Rebbe himself, may also have been a way to bring out more *ahavas Yisroel* amongst Yidden in general, and especially amongst the Chassidim...

I remember how the longtime *mazkir*, Reb Binyomin Klein once spoke about this farbrengen after Chof-Zayin Adar. In general, Reb Binyomin was not a man of many words, but on that particular occasion he was speaking about the Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel farbrengen at great length.

He said that one time, a Chossid asked the Rebbe a question about what to do in a certain situation, and the Rebbe responded with a clear instruction. A little while later, this Chossid's situation changed, and he thought that the Rebbe might change his instruction as well, so he wrote to the Rebbe again, but this time the Rebbe didn't give him any written answer.

On his own, the Chossid decided not to follow the Rebbe's previous instruction, thinking that since the situation changed, the Rebbe's instruction didn't apply anymore. After a while, the Rebbe asked Reb Binyomin what was going on with this Chossid, and he told the Rebbe

that he had decided to act differently, not in accordance with the Rebbe's original instructions. Hearing this, the Rebbe was unhappy.

The Rebbe explained that “When I give an instruction, it should be followed...” In other words, as long as the Rebbe does not give another instruction, whatever the Rebbe said previously needs to be followed meticulously.

Reb Binyomin concluded his words: In the most recent farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke to us about two ideas: How close we are to the coming of Moshiach, and strengthening ourselves with *ahavas Yisroel*. Until we hear another instruction from the Rebbe, these remain the two most important *hora'os* for us to live with and implement into our daily lives.

And of course, everything needs to be done with *simcha*. The Rebbe very often concluded *sichos* with a call to do things with *simcha*. Even the *sichos* of Chof-Ches Nissan 5751* and Gimmel Shevat 5752*, the Rebbe concluded with the words “מתוך שמחה וטוב לבב...”

May Hashem help that very soon, we will complete all the *avodah* that we have to do, and we will be reunited with Rebbe, and he will lead us out of *galus*;
מתוך שמחה וטוב לבב T

1. Sichos Kodesh 5752 vol. 1, p. 11.
2. Ibid. p. 18.
3. Ibid. p. 181.
4. Ibid. p. 168.
5. See Shabbos Parshas Tazria 5749, where the Rebbe explicitly says that now begins a new era, one of nissim etc.
6. According to the Arizal, one should refrain from reciting *pesukim* at night, including Tehillim. However, *poskim* allow reciting Tehillim when davening for someone who is unwell or at times of distress. See Tzitz Eliezer, vol. 8, ch. 2.
7. See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 231:1.