



Sometimes It Takes 50 Years

Rabbi Zalman Wolowik, shliach in the Five Towns, was invited to the bar mitzvah of the son of a mekurav. During the celebration, he was approached by someone who told him this story:

“In 5725*, I was on the board of a national Jewish organization. I considered myself Modern Orthodox, and had never had anything to do with Lubavitch or the Rebbe.

“But out of the blue, one day I received a call, and the caller identified himself as Rabbi Hodakov, the Rebbe’s secretary. ‘The Rebbe wishes to meet with you,’ he told me. I didn’t know why the Rebbe wanted to meet with me, but I figured that there was no reason not to go and so I agreed.

“As soon as I entered the Rebbe’s room, the Rebbe told me, ‘I heard you’re traveling to Russia.’ I was shocked that the Rebbe knew — I was indeed planning to travel to Russia, but the trip was a closely-kept secret, and I hadn’t even told my acquaintances about it. I have no idea — until today — how the Rebbe knew about it.

“The Rebbe went on, ‘There are *Yidden* there — there’s an underground — and I’d like you to bring *tashmishei kedushah* — tefillin, mezuzos, *siddurim*, etc.’¹

“I had come to this meeting out of respect for the Rebbe, but now the Rebbe was asking me to risk my life smuggling contraband religious items into the Soviet Union. That was something I was not willing to do, and I told the Rebbe as much.

“The Rebbe replied, ‘I hear what you’re saying, but still, I’m asking you to do this.’ The Rebbe was insistent. I finally told the Rebbe, ‘I have no connection to Lubavitch; my family has no connection with Lubavitch, I have nothing to do with Lubavitch, and I can’t do this.’

“The Rebbe suddenly became very serious and told me — I’m paraphrasing — ‘Sometimes it takes 50 years until one’s family will have a connection to Lubavitch.’”

“I’m telling you this story, Rabbi Wolowik,” the man continued, “because my grandson and his family now attend Chabad of the Five Towns, and his son — my great-grandson, just became bar mitzvah. And exactly 50 years after my meeting with the Rebbe, this is the first connection with Lubavitch that my family has had.” **T**

1. This type of request was not uncommon — the Rebbe often asked people who were traveling to Russia to bring *tashmishei kedushah* there.