

# א' חס'ס'צ'ע'ר ז'ע'ר'ה'ע'ר

## לעבן מיטן רבין

### SHABBAS TISA (PURIM) 5745

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#### פרשת זכור

הכח שממשיך הרבי ע"י תורת החסידות - נמשך וניתן לנו גם עכשיו, ללא שינוי מצדו, וגם אצלנו לא נעשה שינוי שנחשוב שהרבי לא נמצא אתנו, ח"ו, אלא שהכירו את הרבי במשך שלושים שנות נשיאותו, יודעים שהרבי לא יעזוב את החסידים שלו שישארו לבדם בשבת פרשת זכור, למשל, כשצריכים להלחם בעמלק...

(שיחת ש"פ זכור תש"י)

#### לזכות

**מנחם מענדל יחי' לאשקאר**

לרגל בואו בקשרי  
שידוכין עם בת גילו  
שתח

שיבנו בית נאמן בישראל  
בנין עדי עד על יסודי  
התורה והמצוה כפי שהם  
מוארים במאור שבתורה  
זו היא תורת החסידות

מה הענין בהג' פסוקים  
שאמרו התינוקות למרדכי?  
ג' דרגות בחינה  
ראה לקוטי שיחות חלק כ"א  
שיחת פורים

#### "Like Fire from the Sky"

There's an old saying frequently heard from Chassidim "A Farbrengen from the Rebbe is like fire from the sky".

Each time the Rebbe farbrenged with Chassidim and communicated his message to them was a new sensation. It was impossible to predict beforehand what the Rebbe was going to discuss and what he would present as the "call of the hour" - the mission statement for the current moment. Each Farbrengen was anxiously awaited by every Chossid, and while he reviewed and implemented the Rebbe's every word from the last Farbrengen, he eagerly anticipated the next time they would be *Zoche* to hear the Rebbe's holy words again.

Nevertheless, there were certain occasions when the Rebbe's Farbrengen took on an entirely new light. These were those extraordinary moments when the *Giluyim* from the Rebbe reached their climaxing altitudes. It seemed as if the Rebbe was pouring out more than what was expected as the "norm"; the style, the *Niggunim*, the extra radiance, everything seemed like they were "one notch up".

Purim was that time of year. The Rebbe's Purim Farbrengens were a most special experience for those Chassidim who merited to spend the Yom Tov with the Rebbe. It lifted them up to a real "*Purim'dike*" atmosphere.

#### An Early Farbrengen in the Later Years

Here we would like to share with you a story, not of Farbrengen that took place on Purim, but on what should have been an ordinary Shabbos; Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa, the Shabbos that followed Purim, 5745.

Truth to be told, the heavenly occurrences witnessed at this Farbrengen are fondly remembered by the participants and can hardly be properly described on paper.

This is especially true when considering the fact that it was already in the later years of the Rebbe's leadership when the Shul at 770 was very big and filled with a huge crowd. It was almost unheard of for the Rebbe to get so involved and show such intimate attention to the participants in a Farbrengen as he did in this case, something which reminded everyone of the earlier years, when the crowd at Farbrengens was much smaller and the atmosphere was, by and large, informal.

Throughout the afternoon, the Rebbe turned to countless individuals and instructed them to say large "L'chaims", smiling broadly all the while. Every case of wine in the entire vicinity was eventually brought out to fill the growing demand, and the Chassidim all said "Le'chaim" to the Rebbe and sang joyously.

All of this was in addition to the regular subjects discussed at a Shabbos Farbrengen, including a *Ma'amor*, *Sichos* on *Rashi*, *Zohar*, and *Rambam*, and much more.

After these introductory words, let's get to a few points from the actual Farbrengen!

#### "Lebedik and Purim'dik"

When the Rebbe entered the *Shul* for the Farbrengen at 1:40, he immediately sat down to make Kiddush and Reb Yoel Kahn began this year's *Niggun* on the Rebbe's *Kapital* ("*Ve'yeidu ki ata*"), as he would on any ordinary week. But it was already then that Chassidim realized that this was not to be an ordinary week! The Rebbe suddenly began swinging both his hands fiercely in the air, encouraging the Chassidim to intensify their song with more enthusiasm.

#### Mivtzoim with True Mesirus Nefesh

The first *Sicha* was dedicated to explaining what makes this Shabbos unique, as it is the Shabbos following Purim and is in close proximity to this joyous Yom Tov. Purim signifies *Mesirus Nefesh*, the lesson we take from it for the coming year is to increase our activities in spreading *Yiddishkeit* and involvement in the *Mivtzoim* with *Mesirus Nefesh*, without limiting ourselves to any restrictions, but rather in a manner of "*Ad d'loi yoda*."

#### Reb Yosef "Baal-agola"

There is an incredible story told of one of the Alter Rebbe's Chassidim, Reb Yosef, who was told that for the good of his own *Neshomah*, he needs to take a position as a wagon-driver. He fulfilled this task for ten, long, dreary years until one day he was finally successful in bringing back a *Yid* to *Teshuvah*. Imagine the terrible hardships that Reb Yosef endured throughout all those years! He was someone of high caliber and should have been learning and teaching deep concepts in Chassidus, but instead he was forced to feed straw to horses, just in order that many long years later he would bring the *Neshomah*

(Continued on page 2)

of a *Yid* back to its roots.

This is the *Mesirus Nefesh* that is demanded of us. It is possible for a *Neshomah* comes down to this world for seventy or eighty years just to do **one** favor for a fellow Jew!

This is the attitude in which one is supposed to do the *Mivtzoim*. Even after wandering through all the streets and not seeing any success, no “Purim miracle” happened, one must not give up and continue to work hard doing *Mivtzoim* until the he reaches success.

#### A Big *L'chaim*!

During the *Niggun* after this *Sicha*, the Rebbe turned to Reb Tzvi Steinmetz and instructed him to say *L'chaim* on a large cup. Once he finished the first cup, the Rebbe motioned to him to have a second *L'chaim*! The Rebbe's broad smile remained on his face throughout the entire time, and suddenly he began to wave both his hands over and over, turning from side to side, encouraging the singing on all sides of the *Shul*.

#### *L'chaim* for the *Sofer*

The second *Sicha* was focused specifically to one individual in the crowd. The Shabbos following Purim, the Rebbe began, is an appropriate time to fill-in on any of the things which had to be done on Purim but for whatever reason, was missed out on. One of the *Mitzvos* of Purim is to say *L'chaim* “*Ad d'loi yoda*”. There were those who didn't fulfill this *Mitzvah* for certain reasons, for example a *Sofer*. He may have been overly cautious not to drink at all, for fear of having his handwriting being doomed disqualified and causing his *Sefer Torah* to be unfit!

“Therefore”, the Rebbe concluded, “let him say *L'chaim* now and reconcile for what he missed in Purim. I hope he'll understand on his own whom I'm talking about and not force me to specify his name and his mother's name!”

After this *Sicha*, the Rebbe turned to Rabbi Zirkind and motioned to him to he say *L'chaim*. When he took hold of a small cup, the Rebbe showed that he meant a big cup, and then raised two fingers, indicating that he must have two such *Le'chaims*!

#### Rav of the Sephardim, his Congregation, and the Ashkenazim

As the *Farbrengen* went on, the Rebbe continued to turn to individuals in the crowd and request that they say *Le'chaim*. The next *Sicha* was dedicated to a Rav (referring to Rabbi Avraham Hecht), in which the Rebbe instructed him

that he must say *Le'chaim*. Being that he serves as the rabbi for a *Sephardishe* congregation, all the *Sephardim* present are to say *L'chaim* with him as well.

Later on during the *Farbrengen*, the Rebbe clarified that the instruction to say *L'chaim* and fulfill “*Ad d'loi yoda*” was obviously not limited only to the *Sephardim* present, but the *Ashkenazim* must join along as well! The Rebbe concluded:

“Let us hope that with this *L'chaim* will draw down all the blessings for ourselves and for all the Jewish people, until we'll be able to drink *L'chaim* in the period of ‘*Kuloi Mashke*’, and we will hear *Geshmake* words of Chassidus from *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* himself!”

Now the Rebbe turned to many, many people and motioned to them to say *L'chaim*, but within a few moments, there was no more wine to be found; everything had been finished! Chaos erupted in the *Shul*, as more wine was fetched from Reb Meir Harlig's locker upstairs. Everyone was trying to get their hands on a bit of wine with which to say *L'chaim* to the Rebbe, while the Rebbe was waving his hands and the singing escalated like wildfire!

#### Reb Asher

Reb Asher Sassonkin, an elder Chossid who had sat in prison in Communist Russia for many years had a few good *L'chaims* through the course of the *Farbrengen* and suddenly stood up and began speaking to the crowd, recounting stories of his experiences in while prison.

When he was through, the Rebbe commented, “If he can remember all those details, we must ask a Rav if he has actually reached the point of ‘*Ad d'loi yoda*’”

Reb Asher then began dancing with a fellow Chossid who was seated near him and the Rebbe motioned to a third Chossid to join in with them as well, encouraging the trio's dance with strong movement of his holy hands.

Finally, Reb Asher stopped the dancing and again began with his speeches while pounding loudly on the table. Rabbi Groner attempted to approach Reb Asher and quiet him down, but the Rebbe motioned him away.

The *Farbrengen* continued until very late past *Shkia*, and it was filled with many, many more amazing occurrences, as can be found in the full transcript of the *Farbrengen*.

When Shabbos went out, the Chassidim, and especially the *Bochurim*, continued to *Farbreng* and say *L'chaim*, dancing all through the night, rejuvenated and invigorated by the special day's experiences.

#### PEARLS FROM THE FARBRENGEN

כללות עבודתו של יהודי במשך כל  
ימי חייו עלי אדמות... שבזה נכללים  
כל עניני התורה ומצוותי שעל ידם  
פועל יהודי נח"ר למעלה... לא  
בשביל זה ירדה הנשמה לעולם, כי  
אם כדי לעשות טובה ליהודי  
בגשמיות, ובפרט ברוחניות!...  
♦  
...בהתוועדות זו לקחו, כמובן, קצת  
משקה, כידוע פתגם החסידים:  
"ניע פאמאזשיש נייע פאיעדיש"...  
שתוכנו — שיש "לשמן" את  
ה"גלגלים" בכוסית של "חסידישע  
משקה".

#### “Oib Chassidim, iz Farbrengen!”

One of the stories recounted by Reb Asher:

When he was once taken in for interrogation by the Russian police, he was asked to disclose the location where the Chassidim would gather for their periodical *Farbrengens*. Reb Asher tried denying the allegations and insisted that he knows nothing of such get-togethers, and for all he is concerned, the Chassidim hold no *Farbrengens* at all.

To this, the KGB agent protested angrily: “You can't fool us. We know that it is simply not possible for Chassidim not to hold *Farbrengens*. ‘*Oib Chassidim, iz Farbrengen!*’” (“If [there are] Chassidim, then [there most definitely are] *Farbrengens*”).

# MATANOS for YUD ALEF NISSAN

## Giving of Oneself

The weeks before Yud Alef Nissan are special. They carry an aura of anticipation and excitement that fills the air, calling the Chassidim to rise to the moment. The joy bubbled beneath the surface, erupting in dances and song. Finding two chassidim dancing on Kingston Ave. their abandoned cars a distant memory, oblivious to all honks and horns as they lift their feet in ecstatic joy, would raise no eyebrows. Indeed, this was no uncommon scene.

Yud Alef Nissan is a day of celebration. Not only for the Rebbe in a personal way, which would have already been enough for the Chassidim, but because it is the birthday—the day when מזל גובר of the Nosi—it is the birthday of the entire Dor Hashevi.

The Yud Alef Nissan celebration reaches new heights each year. On the decade anniversaries, the Yom Tov is even greater. The first official Yud Alef Nissan Farbrengen was in honor of the Rebbe's sixtieth birthday in 5752. The next was the Yud Alef Nissan Farbrengen of 5732, the Rebbe's seventieth birthday. [This is the famous farbrengen about Man of the Year, not retiring and 71 new mosdos.]

This year is yet another ten-year milestone, the one hundred and tenth year of the Rebbe.

### The Love of Chassidim

The love Chassidim feel for their Rebbe is legendary. A reporter once visited the Rebbe and among his questions he asked: "Why is it that the Chassidim love you so much?" The Rebbe answered: "Because my love for them is overflowing."

One of the signs of Chassidim's love to the Rebbe is in the personal relationship, not only in the big projects. For many Chassidim this means they would give the Rebbe a present in honor of his birthday.

In the earlier years the Yud Alef Nissan Farbrengen would include a unique scene. Between sichos a procession of diverse individuals would walk up to the Rebbe. Some would be carrying boxes, other envelopes, and others would be holding a few papers. Each person would have a few moments to walk over to the Rebbe, present their gift, wish him L'chaim and step away. The stack of boxes would gradually grow through the evening, spilling into a few piles as the collection increased. At the end of the Farbrengen the Rebbe would take

all of them to his room where he would decide where they would go. Most ended up in the Library.

After 5738, this practice was stopped because it was taking too much of the Rebbe's time. From then, all gifts would be brought to Mazkirus who would bring them in to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe appreciated the gifts, thanking those who brought or sent them, both by letter and during the Farbrengen, wishing them the fulfillment of the heart's desires.

### General gifts

What types of gifts would people give? What gift is appropriate give a Rebbe?

Understandably, the gift would have some sort of *ruchniyusdike* connection even if it was a physical gift. By the Farbrengen of Yud Alef Nissan 5737 (a video of this is available) two painters, father and son, gave the Rebbe a

portrait they made of him. Keys to new Chabad Houses, new sformim, Ksovim, and the like would also be a gift of choice. For example Reb Zalmon Jaffe wanted to give the Rebbe the first copy of the Hebrew-English Tanya on Yud Alef Nissan. (Unfortunately things dragged along and the Tanyas were only ready by Shavuot, but that is a story for itself.)

The other type of gift is the *ruchniyus* one. One hundred tefillin before Yud Alef Nissan, a

new Mitzva Tank, fifty Yidden who learn Torah once a week. Or it might be learning twenty maamorim by heart, sixty blatt Gemara by heart, learning every day for an extra five minutes out of seder, spending a few more minutes on davening.

Once the Rebbe actually spoke about his preferred gift:

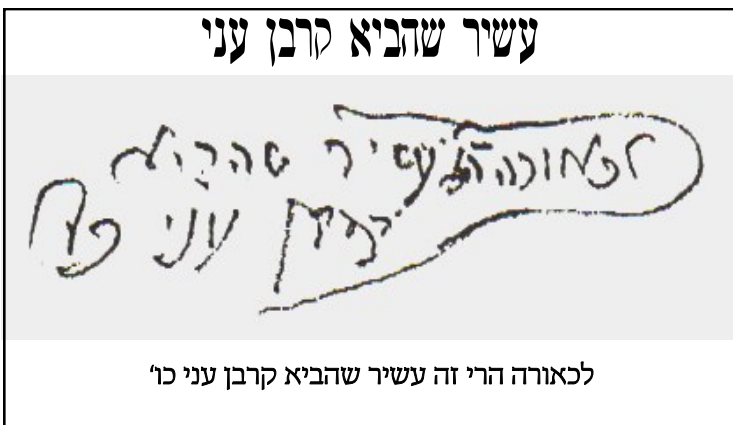
"Now is the time to add:

"Because there are those who are preparing for [my] birthday, and they are thinking, what should the preparation consist of, Tzedaka (which is also connected to Purim) or perhaps Torah...

"Now is the time to make clear, first and foremost the emphasis should be on Inyanim of Torah. And not by giving away money, Tzedaka, for those learning Torah and Torah institutions, although Tzedaka is also commendable and brings down many great brochos, rather by actually learning Torah.

"In other words, plain and simply said, those who wish to give presents, and no-one is required to do so, should add in

(Continued on next page)



Torah.

"Although in general one cannot make conditions on a gift, the whole point is to give nachas ruach, [so I am making clear what I prefer]. Whatever it might be, Tzedaka in this way, more activities, good actions, its nachon, and tov, and yashar, and naim, (with all the 15 expressions in *Vaytziv V'nachon*) everyone should add in some way in Torah study.

"And as mentioned earlier [in the sicha] both in Nigla and in Chassidus."<sup>1</sup>

### Not Enough

The first group of Talmidim HaShluchim to Miami arrived in Chesvan 5734 to be the core of a new Lubavitcher Yeshiva. Among their many peulos, they would arrange farbrengens for Miami and its surrounding communities. By one of the first farbrengens the bochurim decided that they want to give the Rebbe a *Matana* for Yud Alef Nissan, they would each learn a new perek of Tanya by heart in addition to the chapters that they already knew.

They wrote a letter to the Rebbe describing the farbrengen and the hachlata they had made. The answer was soon to follow. The Rebbe circled the words "one perek" and wrote:

"לכאורה הרי זה עשיר שהביא קרבן עני וכו'" This seems to be a rich man who brings a poor man's korban...<sup>2</sup>

Evidently the Rebbe was not satisfied with bochrim only giving a minor gift and fully expected them to make good use of their real capabilities.

### A Fitting Gift

A very fitting gift to the Rebbe would be to learn his Torah. There is an opportunity to do just that and give the Rebbe a beautiful present for his birthday this Yud Alef Nissan: to learn one hundred and ten of the Rebbe's letters over the next month.

In the next few days a one-of-a-kind kovetz will make its

way to your Yeshiva. The Kovetz contains 110 letters written by the Rebbe to all different types of people. Chassidim asking for a bracha, scientists discussing new technologies, bereaved mothers needing comfort, people of all stripes and types wrote to the Rebbe.

The Igros of the Rebbe are a neglected section of the Rebbe's Torah. Some people think that the letters are not "learning material". Chas Veshalom! If one were to look for the Rebbe's take, his approach to any topic out there, the place to find it is in Igros Koidesh. The length and breadth of what the Rebbe speaks about is staggering. (A more comprehensive overview of the Rebbe's letters will Im Yirtze Hashem be published in an expanded edition of the Derher.)

The one hundred and ten letters, corresponding to the Rebbe's one hundred and tenth birthday, are not organized by topic. Rather each bochur will be given the opportunity to immerse themselves in the Rebbe's world-view. The experience is an all-encompassing one; it sweeps across every area of life.

To begin learning Igros can be a daunting experience. The style is different (the Rebbe writes in third person), it is more direct, and you need to guess what the question was from a few well-chosen words of the answer. Additionally, many words are new and the Roshei Teivos are unique to Igros.

This kovetz is designed to assist the bocher. At the bottom of each letter the Roshei Teivos are opened, and hard words are translated.

We are now a little over a month before Yud Alef Nissan; it is high time to ask yourself: What is my *Matana* for the Rebbe?

1. Purim, 5732

2. Certain korbanos vary in type depending on the financial situation of the one bringing the korban. A poor man who brings a larger korban fulfills his obligation, while a rich man who brings a lesser korban is not.

## להשתדל ללמוד בנר יום רמב"ם

When the publishers of Kehos prepared to reprint the Hayom Yom, they compiled an update to the Rebbe's biography, up to the then current date.

When writing about the Rambam campaign they wrote "suggests all Jews to...and to learn in one of three ways: 1) To try to learn three chapters of Rambam...."

When they gave the sheets to the Rebbe for editing, he crossed out the word "להשתדל" "to try".

- ב -

הורה להדפיס הוצאה מיוחדת של ספר התניא ושביטומו יכלול צילומי כל השערים של ספרי התניא שנדפסו ע"ע<sup>16</sup>.

מציג שכאז"א יקבע שיעור יומי בספר משנה תורה - יד החזקה - להרמב"ם, שעי"ז מתאחדים כל בנ"י בלימוד הכולל את התורה כולה, והלימוד - בא' מג' אופנים: א) להשתדל ללמוד בכל יום שלשה פרקים כדי לסיים במשך השנה הבעל"ט, ומה טוב לסיימו בסמיכות ליום הולדת הרמב"ם, י"ד ניסן הבעל"ט, ב) אלה שאי אפשר להם - מפני איזו סיבות ללמוד ג' פרקים בכל יום - ללמוד פרק אחד ליום כדי לסיימו במשך ג' שנים הבעל"ט, ג) אלה שאינם שייכים ללימוד ספר משנה תורה (מפני איזו סיבות - כולל מפני שהם קטנים או קטנות (כפשוטו או בידיעות כו')) - ילמדו ספר המצות להרמב"ם, ובאופן אשר השיעור יומי בטה"מ צ"ה י' במצות המקבילות לשיעור היומי של ס' משנה תורה (כפי שנהלק לשנה אחת)<sup>17</sup>.

### My Master

The<sup>1</sup> *tzaddik*, Reb Shlomo of Karlin, once visited the Alter Rebbe in Liozna. On the conclusion of the visit Reb Shlomo Karlin was escorted on his journey by a group of Chassidim in a most respectful and honored fashion. This was all under the specific directives of the Alter Rebbe, who also instructed that Reb Binyomin be a part of the group. Along the way they discussed with him ideas in Torah, both Nigleh and Chassidus, impressing him greatly with their vast grasp and deep understanding.

Upon their arrival in Vitebsk the group dispersed, however Reb Shlomo requested Reb Binyomin to accompany him further, until they reached Bshenkovitz, to which Reb Binyomin agreed.

Along the way Reb Shlomo wanted to stop to daven Mincha, but there was no water nearby with which he could wash his hands. Still seated in the wagon he fell into a deep state of D'veikus. The horses then began running and running, increasing their speed until they were totally uncontrollable. They continued in this manner until they came to an abrupt halt, lo and behold a small river was in front of them!

After washing his hands and davening, Reb Shlomo instructed that the horses be sent on ahead by themselves and that he and Reb Binyomin would continue on by foot.

Arriving on Thursday, Reb Binyomin was unable to return home before Shabbos. Spending a Shabbos in Bshenkovitch by Reb Shlomo, witnessing his holy and saintly conduct greatly impacted Reb Binyomin. He was so enthralled by the experience that he considered spending some more time in the presence of this holy Tzaddik.

Before returning to Liozna, Reb Binyomin went to the Tzaddik to receive his parting words and blessings. They sat together for many hours, and Reb Shlomo revealed great secrets to Reb Binyomin. Rabbi Shlomo also tried to persuade him to stay on in Shenkovitch. When they were about to conclude, Reb Shlomo said, "I will help you come closer to the Alter Rebbe's approach. I will also arrange groups of men who are suitable 'vessels' for this [the Alter Rebbe's] way of Avodah".

Reb Binyomin heard him out till the end and then replied in Polish, "The master is a master but not mine, the servant is a servant but not yours".

And off he went, back to Liozna, back to his Rebbe – The Alter Rebbe.

### By the Mittlerer Rebbe

As mentioned before, Reb Binyomin also merited being a Chossid of the Mittlerer Rebbe and Tzemach Tzedek.

The Alter Rebbe was Nistalek in the Russian village of Piene. At that time, his son and soon to be successor, the Mittlerer Rebbe, was in Kremenchug

In a letter<sup>2</sup> of the Mittlerer Rebbe,

dated immediately after the Histalkus of his Father - the Alter Rebbe, he describes his great pain and grief and that of all Chassidim caused by this terrible happening. "I was without comfort for many days, when news of this tragedy reached me I fell to the floor in anguish", he writes, and goes on to express the comfort he felt after a visit by a certain Reb Binyomin from Shklov.

Although it is not one hundred percent clear which Reb Binyomin he is referring to, nevertheless it makes sense to presume it is 'our' Reb Binyomin.

### And the grand total is...

To end off, perhaps with the most well known story of Reb Binyomin, one which the Rebbe recounted a number of times during farbrengens<sup>3</sup>.

Reb Binyomin was once making an accounting of his business. After writing up all the expenses and numbers he made a grand total and it came to "Ein Oid Milvado", that's exactly as he wrote it because that is exactly how he lived and breathed; the sum total of all a man's work is "that there exist nothing besides Hashem".

In a letter<sup>4</sup> the Rebbe explains that this was a natural conclusion for him to come to, not that he had to contemplate on this idea and then write it in...

1. Igros Kodesh Rayatz vol. 2 pg-369-370

2. Igros Kodesh Admur Ha'emtzo vol.1, pg - 234

3. Yud Tes Kislev 5725 and others

4. Igros Kodesh vol.16, pg - 350

## A BEFITTING TIME

### Translation of Ksav Yad {onpage 7}

(free translation)

*The first expression the Rebbe uses, is one found in the Gemara.*

*The Gemara asks, if there is a source Possuk for a halcha why bring proof from a Minhag that corroborates it, this is totally unnecessary!*

(You bring proof from Yehudah in addition to the Possuk?)

*[It is superfluous for me to mention what you have done, for the thing itself is great and needs not my approval.]*

I was greatly pleased to hear about your participation in a Siyum and Haschala of the Rambam.

And these days [of Golus] are a very befitting time for [the fulfillment of the Possuk, with which the Rambam ends off his 'Yad Hachazakah', that in the times of Moshiach there will be a revelation of Elokus in the world] "like water covers the sea".





# PURIM IN THE RABBEIM'S COURTYARD

## THE BAAL SHEMTOV

### A Lofty Soul

At the Baal Shem Tov's Purim seudah in the year 5505, he spoke for the first time about the new Neshamah that was destined to be born into the world, referring to the Alter Rebbe, who would be born Elul of that year.

The Besht spoke about the *Mesirus Nefesh* that every Yid has and how this is represented by the name the Yidden are called by in the Megillah—'Yehudim'.

After Purim the Baal Shem Tov called one of his Talmidim, Reb Yissochor Dov Kabilniker, and another Melamed. He told them to go to Liozna, to the house of Reb Boruch (the Alter Rebbe's father), and give a Bracha to his wife, who was in her fourth month of expecting with the Alter Rebbe.

This was told over by the Frierdiker Rebbe at the Purim Seudah of the year 5705, exactly two hundreds years from when it had originally transpired.

## ALTER REBBE & TZEMACH TZEDEK

### A 'Child's' Quandary

As a young boy of five or six years old, around Purim time, the Tzemach Tzedek was eagerly learning the Megillah in Cheder. In the days before Purim the Alter Rebbe asked him if he had learned the Megillah, to which the young boy excitedly replied that he had indeed done so. "Did you understand it?" asked his grandfather. "No I didn't", he replied and he continued with the question that was weighing on his mind, "I don't understand why Haman had to build the gallows so tall, fifty Amos, Mordechai certainly wasn't that tall?!" the Alter Rebbe was silent. A few days later, on Purim, he delivered a profound and deep Maamor explaining this very concept that had bothered his young grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek.

The Maamor focuses on the fifty Amos, explaining they represent the "Shaar haNun" (a very high level) to which Haman raised himself up to, and it was from that very place that he had his downfall.

## MITTELER REBBE

### A New Tale

It occurred once that the Miteler Rebbe traveled on a shlichus of his father - the Alter Rebbe - around Purim time. Unable to return home in time, he had to spend Purim in the town of Orsha.

In the town of Orsha there was a custom that after the reading of Megillah they would pass a plate around and people would place money in it for the Baal Koreh. When the plate came by the Miteler Rebbe he put in a handsome amount of five

rubles whereas the rest of the money combined didn't even add up to a single ruble!

The Baal Koreh came over and said that he didn't want all that money, "I don't deserve it" he claimed.

However the Miteler Rebbe was quite persistent and insisted that he accept the money. "You read such a beautiful story, like I've never heard before!" he said.

When the Mashpia Reb Groinem related this story, he explained that the Miteler Rebbe had heard the Megillah every year from the Alter Rebbe, who would read it as a lofty spiritual experience. When he heard it from this Baal Koreh he heard it as a simple story and that was truly a story he had never heard before.

## REBBE MAHARASH, REBBE RASHAB, FRIEDIKER REBBE

### A lesson from the Megillah

The Frierdiker Rebbe was once on his way to carry out a mission for his father. Before he left, the Rebbe Rashab asked him to exert himself to do a favor for a certain Chossid, a businessman who was in distress and in need of assistance.

Upon his return, he readily reported to his father that he had fulfilled the mission placed on him and that he had indeed helped that Chossid.

"You are making a mistake", his father replied, "You did a favor for yourself, not for him. Hashem did him a favor by arranging an appropriate Shliach to come to his aide".

He then proceeded to tell him a story:

The year of 5648 was very harsh for the Yidden of Russia. The local Russian populace was very often incited against their Jewish neighbors. Hatefull enemies would spew poison at these believing and unsuspecting peasants, convincing them that the Jews were the source of all their problems. Sadly this usually resulted in rampaging mobs and general pillage of businesses and homes.

The Rebbe Maharash, my saintly father, had many connections in S. Petersburg and he set out to see what he could do to help the situation. After a mere few days, he had found ways to put a stop to these pogroms, however it did not yet become official. In order to do this he was told to prepare a distinguished delegation which should include prominent Maskilim - members of the 'Enlightenment movement'.

Upon his return, he called together a meeting to prepare the necessary delegation. He explained the situation and finished by suggesting that the Maskilim arrange a group who would take part in this endeavor.

This was a great surprise for all those present, for it was not uncommon knowledge that the Rebbe Maharash had much disdain for the opinion of such people.

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In fact one of those people present, incensed by the 'audacity' of his request, jumped up and proclaimed, "We are not lumps of wood to be moved around like pawns, if you value our opinion and help, do so all the time, if not, we can be dismissed now as well!"

Unyielding my father replied: In the Megillah it says the serious words Mordechai told Esther, "if you remain silent... help will come from elsewhere... but you and your father's house will perish". The Yidden will be saved, if you choose not to participate it will come from elsewhere, but then "you and your father's house will perish"; you will have missed your opportunity.

After finishing his story the Rebbe Rashab turned to his son and said, "One should always keep in mind that when he does a good deed he is in fact doing a favor to himself. One has to firmly believe that help will come, if not through them then from elsewhere, but then he will lose out".

The Rebbe Rashab continued explaining this idea to his son, based on the Kabbalah's interpretation of the above quoted words from the Megillah.

## THE REBBE

### A Timely Delay

Entering late to the Farbrengen of Purim 5731, the Rebbe began the first sicha by explaining this out of sync occurrence. "Everything is B'hasgocha Protis, since in the meantime I was able to receive word that the Shluchim who had gone to the army bases in the Suez had come back home". As the Rebbe elaborated on this story, tears were streaming down his face (as was usual, when speaking about the soldiers who protect Eretz Yisroel).

Later on details surfaced, clarifying what exactly the Rebbe had meant with the first few minutes of the farbrengen.

5731 was the first year that Chassidim in Israel went out on Mivtza Purim to the soldiers. On the morning of Purim they flew to Refidim in Sinai. Once there, they broke up into groups and went to dozens of bases in the area, giving the soldiers the opportunity to put on Tefillin and to help them fulfill the Mitzvah's of the day, as well as bringing them the joy of the Yom Tov.

They were all supposed to meet up together in Refidim at a set time and from there they would fly back home, in time to catch the broadcast of the Rebbe's Farbrengen. As it turns out, one of the groups came late and missed the flight. Most of the Chassidim had made the flight, but one group remained behind to wait for the delayed group.

Realizing that they would not make it in time to 'be' by the

Rebbe's Farbrengen, and not willing to give up so easily, they asked the commanding officer if he could hook them up to Kfar Chabad and from there they would be connected to New York.

Unbelievably, the communication officer gave the approval. What a sight it must have been, a group of Chassidim deep in the Sinai desert standing for hours, listening to the Rebbe farbreng.

Apparently the Rebbe knew of their attempts to obtain a hookup and waited in his room, holding up the entire crowd, till these Chassidim were ready, at which point he came out to the Farbrengen.

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labeled these pastries prepared in remembrance of Haman's downfall. "Haman oyern" in Yiddish, "oznei Haman" in Hebrew and "orrechi d'Aman" in Italian...

### An invigorating treat

*Excerpted from the newly released memoirs of Rebbetzin Chanah in which she describes how the seemingly trivial Minhag of eating Hamantaschen invigorated her and Reb Levik's spirits during those harsh times.*

The festival of Purim arrived. We had a Megillah, which I had once included in a food package I had sent my husband.

For Purim we were visited by two evacuees, a young Jewish man, inclined towards Communism, and his female neighbor, an engineer who had once studied Yiddish and was interested in Judaism.

Sometime before, I had set aside some white flour, with which I baked two Hamantaschen. Although it's a minor custom, it played an important role in our lives, reminding us that we were still human and still Jews, and that not every day was the same. We were reminded that we could be concerned with loftier concepts—not just with thinking about our daily bread, and drawing the pail of water from the well and hauling it through the mud, always spilling some and making the already swampy ground even muddier.

The two guests were our company for Purim. They regarded Hamantaschen as an excessive extravagance and, as was prevalent in that culture, inveighed against the "old-fashioned" customs.<sup>10</sup>

1. Sefer Menuchah U'Kedushah 2:20

2. Alshich, see ibid.

3. See Gemorah Megillah 13.

4. Sefer Matamim, Purim 2.

5. See Nitei Gavriel Purim, pg - 394

6. Sefer Matamim, Purim 2

7. Otzar Kol Minhagei Yeshurun, 50:11, p. 126

8. Sefer HaMoadim, vol. 6, p. 153

9. Sefer HaMoadim, vol. 6, p. 153

10. Memoirs of Rebbetzin Chana - Part 18, Lahak.

The following is an answer the Rebbe gave to a Rav, who informed him that he had participated in a Siyum of Rambam:

(כיהודה ועוד לקרא) - נהנתי מהשתתפותי כתר [=כבוד תורתו]  
בסיום - ופתיחת הרמב"ם והזמ"ג בזמנה"ז [=והזמן גרמא בזמן  
הזה] - לכמים לים מכסים

(Translation on page 5)

הנהנתי מהשתתפותי כתר  
בסיום - ופתיחת הרמב"ם  
והזמ"ג בזמנה"ז  
לכמים לים מכסים

# Why do we eat Hamantaschen?

## Q&A

**Why is there a minhag to eat Hamantaschen on Purim? And what do they represent?**

Well, believe it or not every aspect of the *Hamantasch* has a significance and a reason. From the shape to the name and everything in the middle, and I mean that literally, even the traditional filling, has something to teach us.

**Let us start with the 'cookie' itself.**

### A natural miracle

An effective description of a *Hamantasch* is - a pastry whose filling is hidden inside the dough. This sums up the miracle of Purim, a great miracle hidden and concealed in the laws of nature.<sup>1</sup>

### Contraband mail

During the early stages of the decree, the Yidden did not believe that they were going to be completely wiped out. In an effort to convince them of the seriousness of the situation, Mordechai sent numerous letters to them describing the true brutish natures of Haman and Achashveirosh and their desire to carry out such terrible schemes. However, because Mordechai feared that the king might intercept these messages that painted him in an unfavorable light, Mordechai hid them in pastries, which he then sent to the Yidden. These pastries turned out to be true saviors, for when they found Mordechai's letters hidden within the dough, they became convinced of the true severity of the situation and were stirred to Teshuvah. On Purim, we eat *hamantaschen*, to commemorate how the hidden filling of Mordechai's pastries brought about our salvation.<sup>2</sup>

### The Filling

#### A strict diet

Nowadays, *hamantaschen* are filled with all types of jellies, jams, and even chocolate. However, originally they were filled with either sesame or poppy seeds, designed as a method of fulfilling the Minhag of eating seeds on Purim. This was implemented to remind us of Esther's dedication to Yiddishkeit. In the hub of the king's palace, where delicacies of every sort were prepared, Esther resorted to simple seeds and the like, to avoid eating anything Treif.<sup>3</sup>

### The shape

#### Three points of a triangle

The three-sided shape of the *Hamantasch* represents the three Avos; Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov whose *Zechus* helped saved the Yidden on Purim by causing Haman to become "*tash*," weakened.<sup>4</sup> [See below for more on this]

#### Number three

Purim placed the final touches on Kabbolas HaTorah, as the Gemorah says, "At the time of Purim the Yidden fulfilled what they had accepted at Har Sinai". Therefore we ate a three cornered pastry to remind us of a triple Torah (Tanach), which was given to a nation which is threesome, (Kohanim, Leviim, Yisraeilim) by a 'third' - Moshe, who was born third to his mother, in the third month - Sivan. (When counting from Nissan.<sup>5</sup>)

### The name

#### Inside out

Something quite unique about Purim is the irony of the string of events leading to the miracle, the very person who desired to destroy us, was the one to actually bring about our salvation.

Haman's decree to annihilate the Yidden caused an arousal to Teshuva and recommitment to the Torah, culminating in the hanging of Haman on the same gallows he had built to execute Mordechai. We eat *hamantaschen* on Purim, a sweet cookie named after the bitter Haman, to symbolize the *v'nahafoch hu* - the "turnabout".

#### Haman or mann?

In Yiddish, poppy seeds are called "*mohn*," and pockets are called "*taschen*," revealing the source of the name *mohn-taschen*. Beginning with the custom of eating seeds, this pastry became a Purim delicacy because of the similarity of the word *mohn* to Haman both in pronunciation and in spelling. For this reason, the name *mohn-taschen* eventually evolved into *hamantaschen*.<sup>6</sup>

#### Haman the 'Weakened' man

The word *tash* means to "weaken." On Purim, we specifically eat the *hamantaschen* because it means "Haman became weakened." This commemorates Hashem saving us by weakening Haman during the time of Purim, and in addition expresses the wish that Hashem should always save us by weakening the Haman's of every generation.<sup>7</sup>

#### Wipe out Amalek!

Just as eating destroys the food being eaten, by eating a food that carries the name of Haman, we symbolically fulfill the mitzvah of destroying Amalek.<sup>8</sup>

#### A shameful expression

There is a teaching that describes how Haman bent over in shame when he entered the king's treasury to retrieve the royal robes and horse for Mordechai, just before he was to parade Mordechai through the streets. In describing Haman's shame, the Midrash says that he was bent over with "*oznayim mekutatot*," meaning "clipped ears."<sup>9</sup> From this description, many communities

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### ללימוד הרמב"ם

פרק יב. סיום מחזור ל	פרק יב. סיום מחזור ל	ה' באדר	ו'
אז וגו'. כל המצות... מו' א' - להי	אז וגו'. כל המצות... שנת	ט' באדר	ש"ק
ישראל.	החמה.	י' באדר	א'
כל אלו החמשים... בין ראשון בין	מצות עשה. א מצוה ראשונה... אין לו.	י"א באדר	ב'
אחרון.	מצות לא תעשה. א מצוה... אלו הם... בין עשה ובין לא תעשה.	י"ב באדר	ג'
ודברים הללו... שנת החמה.	וראתי לחלק... בעזרת ש-די.	י"ג באדר	ד'
מצות עשה. א מצוה ראשונה... פג להביא... שמה.	משוך חסדן וגו'. ספר המדע	י"ד באדר	ה'
פד להקריב... קסו לשבות... קדש.	הל' יסורי התורה פרק א-ג.		
קסו לשבות... רמח לרן... אין לו.	פרק ד-ו.		