



מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות
לכ"ק אדמו"ר
לרגל יום הבהיר י"א ניסן

ולזכות שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר בכל אתר ואתר
שיצליחו, שימלאו שליחותם הק'
מתוך הצלחה מרובה בגו"ד ומתוך מנוחת הנפש

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל
וזוגתו מרת אסתר מרים
ומשפחתם שיחיו
ליפשיץ

BRE THE





AKING ICE

After being profoundly inspired by the ways of Lubavitch and the teachings of Chassidus by his peers in the Manchester Yeshiva, Reb Aharon Cousin traveled to learn by the Rebbe in 770 in 5717. He was the first British-born boy to do so. Eventually, Rabbi Cousin went on to serve as the headmaster of the Lubavitch Boys Primary School in London.*

Interview by: Rabbi Yanky Bell | Written by: Rabbi Bentzion Schtroks

Transforming into a Yeshiva Bochur

Growing up in Leeds, England, I had a challenging childhood. My mother passed away when I was very young, and being at home felt lonely. All three of my siblings were away from home, my brother served in the Royal Air Force and my two sisters studied at university. Aside from the circumstances at home, the dreadful anti-Semitic climate that we lived in did not make things any brighter.

Not only were we scared to walk on the streets out of fear of being assaulted and hurt, but even the teachers at school were anti-Semites who would beat us with their favorite “weapon.” One would use a cane, the other a ruler, and another would use a rubber slipper. They made us feel miserable.

Ninety percent of the 600 students in the school were not Jewish, and they would physically and verbally harass us too.

I attended a local Jewish after-school program (Talmud Torah) which was considered to be Orthodox, but in reality did not have very high standards at all. The amount of Judaic studies there was at an absolute minimum.

Shortly after my bar mitzvah, on Erev Rosh Hashanah 5711*, my mother sadly passed away (as mentioned) from a severe disease, and I began to attend shul to recite kaddish daily. There, I met two boys from the Manchester Yeshiva who befriended me and engaged in many conversations with me.

They would share with me how wonderful the Manchester Yeshiva was and how much they enjoyed being there. The atmosphere that they

described was so peaceful, all the boys got along with each other, the educators were G-d fearing Jews who treated others with dignity, and the students were constantly immersed in learning Hashem’s holy Torah.

To me, it sounded like Gan Eden.

You could only imagine how much I liked the idea of moving over from the non-Jewish school which I was then studying at, to the Manchester Yeshiva, and so I asked and pleaded with my father to send me there.

My father made arrangements for an interview with the rosh yeshiva, Reb Yehuda Zev Segal. When the long-awaited date arrived, I excitedly traveled with my father by train from Leeds to Manchester and showed up for the interview.

Rabbi Segal began the meeting with his first question that was directed to me: “What have you studied in Talmud Torah?” I said that I learned Chumash. “Do you learn Mishnayos or Gemara?” he asked. I innocently replied: “I never heard of that.” The rosh yeshiva couldn’t believe what he heard! He then continued and asked: “Which Chumash do you study?” I said that I learned about Joseph and his brothers. “Ok,” he said, as he opened a Chumash and asked me to start reading.

I began: “*Vayidaber Hashem*”—and Hashem spoke, “*el Moshe*”—to Moshe, and then I was stuck. I simply wasn’t capable of translating any further. He then asked me if I could read the Rashi. “What is Rashi?” I asked. They never told us anything about Rashi in Talmud Torah.

With a facial expression full of regret and dissatisfaction, the rosh yeshiva looked at me, then looked at my father and said: “I can’t accept you into the yeshiva. The students here are on a very high standard. I don’t have a class to put you in. I’m sorry.”

My father began to plead with him. He said: “My son is an orphan, he lost



RABBI AHARON COUSIN IN 5712*

his mother, and when he comes home from school he has nobody to talk to.” After much arguing back and forth, the rosh yeshiva was still not ready to accept me, and we turned to go.

Just then, I exclaimed: “But I want to learn!”

I can’t understand where I pulled together the courage to say that since it was not at all acceptable at the time for children to speak up like that. The rosh yeshiva looked at me and said: “You want to learn?” “Yes,” I fervently answered. The rosh yeshiva then said: “Today is Sunday. I want you to go back home and pack your bags, and be here on Tuesday.”

The yeshiva in Manchester was like a melting pot. It had many types of bochurim; Belz, Bobov, Satmar, Litvish, English boys, and a few Lubavitchers.

When I began studying at the Manchester Yeshiva in 1951, World War II had just recently ended. As such, most of the bochurim were orphans who had lost their families, and some were even survivors of the brutal concentration camps.

Every Thursday night, aside from bochurim staying up and learning for many hours, it also became the custom for bochurim to sit together and share

memories from the war, so much of which was truly remarkable and soul-stirring to listen to.

Everyone had incredible and unforgettable stories to share, and there were so many different emotions that they aroused. Many told of the great miracles that occurred to them when the Aibershter saved them in one way or another. Others told of the unbearable conditions that Yidden endured. The list can go on and on, there were

so many unforgettable memories that were shared.

But what moved me the most, was the unparalleled *mesiras nefesh* to keep and spread Yiddishkeit in ways that they weren't even required to according to Shulchan Aruch, that the Lubavitcher bochurim told of. The bold stance that the Friediker Rebbe took against the Communist regime, opening underground *chadarim*, building and maintaining secretive

mikvaos, and other Jewish activities that were all highly punishable and risky, is what intrigued me the most.

In my rational mind, Yiddishkeit was something that was kept when it came easy, but if it becomes too difficult, one is not responsible. The approach that Lubavitch took, and the huge sacrifices that they made, completely blew my mind.

The learning standards in the Manchester Yeshiva were exceptional.

THE FIRST LETTER FROM THE REBBE

In 5712* I had my first correspondence with the Rebbe. I wrote a letter introducing myself and explaining a little bit about my background. I wrote that my mother had passed away and that I had started learning in the Manchester Yeshiva. The Rebbe wrote back a most beautiful English letter, dated 23 Tammuz 5712* and signed with the Rebbe's holy signature. This letter still has a profound impact on me today. Its message was so appropriate and enlightening to a thirteen-year-old boy who was just starting to learn in yeshiva.

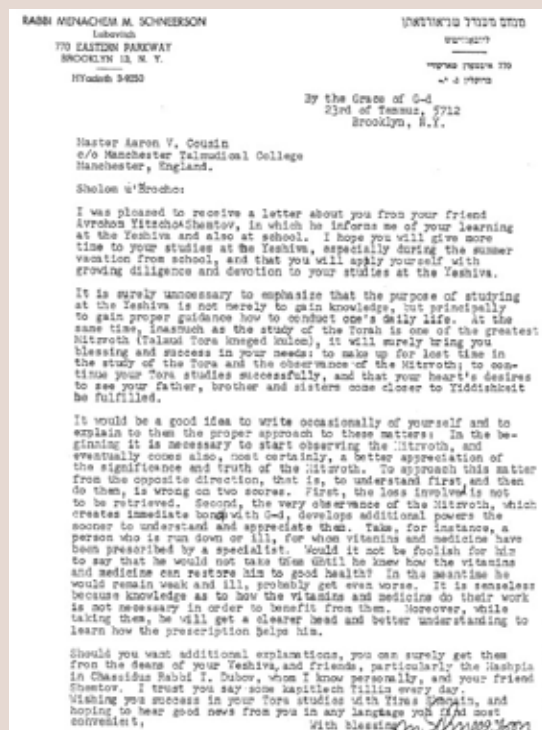
The Rebbe explained the following beautiful idea, learning from a doctor prescribing medicine:

"In the beginning it is necessary to start observing the Mitzvoth, and eventually comes also, most certainly, a better appreciation of the significance and truth of the Mitzvoth. To approach this matter from the opposite direction, that is, to understand first, and then do them, is wrong on two scores. First, the loss involved is not to be retrieved. Second, the very observance of the mitzvot, which creates immediate bonds with G-d, develops additional powers the sooner to understand and appreciate them.

"Take, for instance, a person who is run down or ill, for whom vitamins and medicine have been prescribed by a specialist. Would it not be foolish for him to say that he would not take them until he knew how the vitamins and medicine can restore him to good health? In the meantime he would remain weak and

ill, probably get even worse. It is senseless because knowledge as to how the vitamins and medicine do their work is not necessary in order to benefit from them. Moreover, while taking them, he will get a clearer head and better understanding to learn how the prescription helps him."

Until today, this concept serves as a foundation for my studies. At times, I learn something that I may not understand, but I know that there is a good explanation, and I only need to work harder to comprehend it.²



During times of learning, bochurim would sit and learn diligently and intensely. When it came time for a break, however, we would all run to the field and play sports. That was, aside from the Lubavitcher bochurim who would learn in their free time as well.

This caused me to explore what exactly it was that the Lubavitchers possessed which made them so unique and special. That is when I started to speak with Rabbi Yitzchak Dubov¹ who was a Lubavitcher Chossid and one of the *maggidei shiur* in the yeshiva. We began to learn Chassidus together, which I enjoyed immensely.

The Best Years

One by one, the Lubavitcher bochurim started leaving to learn in 770. The Gurkow brothers, the Shemtov brothers, and Berel Futerfas all went, and I too wanted to travel to New York to learn near the Rebbe!

One day the rosh yeshiva called me into his office and said: “Aharon, why are you growing a beard?” I said: “Because I want to go learn in Lubavitch, and in Lubavitch they wear beards.” “Lubavitch is not for you,” he said. “You should go learn in Mir, or where I learned, in Slabodka. Anyways, take it off.”

There was no such thing as not listening to the rosh yeshiva, but Rabbi Dubov advised me to keep my beard.

A few months later I finally received my I-20 visa from the yeshiva at 770, and I traveled to New York.

My older sister Vichna Kaila was working in Leeds at the time and was earning exactly three pounds a week. A ticket from London to New York by ship cost sixty pounds at the time. My sister saved up all of her earnings for five months and paid for my ticket. Without her huge sacrifice and gift, I



REB YITZCHOK DUBOV LEARNING TANYA WITH STUDENTS AT THE MANCHESTER YESHIVA.

may have never made it to the Rebbe, and I am forever grateful to her for that.

Coming to the Rebbe

I arrived at 770 in the beginning of Cheshvan 5717*. The very first time that I saw the Rebbe was when he came out to *krias haTorah*, and then again to Mincha and Maariv that day. The experience of being in the Rebbe’s holy presence for the first time was breathtaking and unreal.

With me, I brought a letter from Rabbi Dubov that he asked me to deliver to the Rebbe. I didn’t read the whole letter, but I noticed that it started off with the words: “*Hinei noseia habochur harishon meiAngliyah*—the first bochur from England is traveling...” I was the first English bochur that came to the Rebbe. I sort of broke the ice. After that, there were many others, including Feivish Vogel, Yosef Boruch Spielman, Avrohom Jaffe, and now *ka”h* there are hundreds of *yungerleit* that came to learn in 770.

I merited to enter *yechidus* for the first time on 27 Cheshvan. One of the questions I wrote in my *tzetel*

was whether or not I should switch from davening in Nusach Ashkenaz to Nusach Ari. I knew that I was permitted to do so according to halacha, but I wanted the Rebbe’s guidance and *bracha*. The Rebbe said: “Yes, you should switch, but you should wait until Rosh Chodesh,” which was three days later.

The Rebbe asked me if I had a *siddur*. I responded: “I don’t, but I will buy one.” The Rebbe said to me: “I will give you one.” The Rebbe searched his desk where there were large piles of *sefarim*, but didn’t find a *siddur*. He then pressed the buzzer for Rabbi Hodakov who hurried in swiftly. “*S’iz efsher faran fun di kleine siddurim fun Merkos*—Are there perhaps any of the small *siddurim* of Merkos?” the Rebbe asked. Rabbi Hodakov went to look.

A few minutes passed but Rabbi Hodakov had still not returned. Meanwhile, the Rebbe asked me a few more questions about what I was learning, who I was learning with, and various other things. The Rebbe also asked me about my sister Esther Leah. (Every subsequent time that I was in *yechidus* the Rebbe again asked: “*Voss macht di shvester in Manchester*—How is your sister in Manchester doing?” referring to her.) Then the Rebbe said: “I don’t know why he hasn’t returned, but I will see to it that you receive one.”



ON 16 SHEVAT 5735, AS RABBI COUSIN PREPARED TO RETURN FROM 770 TO LONDON, HIS 11 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER SORELE STOOD IN GAN EDEN HATACHTON HOLDING A CAMERA AS THE REBBE WAS ON HIS WAY TO THE SMALL SHUL FOR MAARIV. THE REBBE STOPPED, SMILED AND ASKED IF SHE WANTED TO USE THE CAMERA AND PAUSED FOR A MOMENT AS SHE TOOK THIS BEAUTIFUL PICTURE

After leaving *yechidus*, I hurriedly sat down in the small zal upstairs, and began transcribing my *yechidus*, when I heard someone calling me “Kuzhin, Kuzhin.” He exclaimed in his Russian accent, “The Rebbe wants to see you!” I had already forgotten about the siddur.

I went to Gan Eden Hatachton, and Rabbi Groner directed me to go into the Rebbe’s holy room. To my surprise, when I opened the door, I saw the Rebbe speaking to Rabbi Yitzchok Ushpal. (I then saw a most unusual sight: Usually, one would give their *tzetel* to the Rebbe, and stand back in front of the Rebbe’s desk. But here, Rabbi Ushpal was standing right near the Rebbe behind the desk, reading the *tzetel* out loud, and the Rebbe was looking up at him.) Seeing this, I immediately jolted back and closed the door, but Rabbi Groner told me to go back in.

When I cracked the door open just a moment beforehand, I noticed that the Rebbe was holding the small siddur in his holy hand as he spoke to Rabbi Ushpal. I then realized that the Rebbe must have been waiting for me, and I entered once again. The Rebbe stood up and handed me the siddur and said: “*Zolst davenen besimcha un matzliach zayn*—You should daven joyfully and be successful.”

Years in Gan Eden

I merited to study in 770 near the Rebbe for four years, and one year in the yeshiva in Newark, NJ. Those were the best years of my life. I was *zoche* to be at ten of the Rebbe’s Pesach *sedarim*. I received a silver dollar for Chanukah gelt from the Rebbe four times. I would go on the Released

Time program (the “Wednesday hour,” teaching Jewish public school children about Yiddishkeit), and I was involved in *mesibos Shabbos* and sharing Chassidus in shuls.

An incident I remember from when the Rebbe distributed Chanukah gelt, is when the Rebbe said to one of the bochurim: “Take for your *chaver* in Montreal”. The bochur had already passed by, and Reb Yisroel Jacobson was standing between him and the Rebbe, so Reb Yisroel took the dollar to pass to the bochur. The Rebbe said: “*Nein, lomir em geben*—No, let me give it to him.” The Rebbe took that dollar and put it back into the bag, took out another dollar, and gave it to the bochur himself.

During the years that I spent in 770, the Rebbe sent the first couples out on shlichus. Among the bochurim, there was a lot of talk about potential places where it was possible to move on shlichus. The Rebbe heard about this and addressed it publicly. I remember the Rebbe spoke very strongly: “A bochur when he sits in yeshiva, may not think about any things that he will pursue in his life, even *tachlisim* (pursuits) of *kedusha*. All that a bochur should do is to learn and daven.”

I didn’t like to take the Rebbe’s time. When I would go into *yechidus* it was very brief; I would ask for a bracha and that was it. I wouldn’t ask many questions. I heard that the Rebbe once said: “*Ich vel monin di minutin*—I will demand the minutes.” Any time that I took from the Rebbe, I knew the Rebbe could ask me how I made it worth it. Later on, when I became a headmaster of the school in London, I would ask more questions.

I had an aunt that lived in Manchester who unfortunately became very ill and was hospitalized. The doctors examined her and concluded that they certainly would need to amputate one of her legs, and perhaps

THE COUSIN FAMILY

I once wrote to the Rebbe and asked for a bracha for my brother who was in the Royal Air Force. I wrote that it isn't possible to keep Yiddishkeit in the air force, thinking that since he is surrounded by non-Jews it must not be possible. The Rebbe wrote back: "This is, of course, incorrect and you should impress this upon your brother. There are thousands of Jewish soldiers in the army who observe the Mitzvah of Tefillin and prayer etc. The Tefillin is especially important for Jewish boys in military service, for, apart from the Mitzvah involved, it is also a Segulah for safety and a return home in good health..."

One of our children was not very disciplined, and we asked the Rebbe what we could do about it. The Rebbe said that we should appoint them in a leading position in whatever it might be. This way they will need to set a good example and automatically it will cause them to become more disciplined. Of course, we listened to the Rebbe and baruch Hashem the strategy worked wonders.

We have a son, Mendel, who has special needs. Raising him was a tremendous challenge. We constantly needed to take him from one specialist to the next, and the emotional and financial burden drained us. At one point, we were looking for a school for him, and the Rebbe told Reb Hirshel Chitrik who traveled to many countries for business, that he should tell us to reach out to a specific school in Japan that might meet our child's needs. We did apply to the school, but unfortunately, the school didn't accept our son.

After a specific out-of-town hospital visit with Mendel, my wife traveled with him the next day to New York. They waited upstairs outside of the Rebbe's room until the Rebbe would return from Mincha. Standing in one place for fifteen minutes with an autistic child was not easy, but my wife held onto him and managed to make it work. When the Rebbe came towards his room, Mendel pulled the Rebbe's sleeve and my wife was horrified. The Rebbe turned around and gave Mendel a huge smile that will never be forgotten.

One year on Chanukah, we traveled to the Rebbe with our entire family and we went into yechidus together. At the end of the yechidus, the girls approached the Rebbe's desk to receive their dollars. The Rebbe said to them: "Your mother should come first."

Once, I went into yechidus on my own, and I wrote in my tzetel asking for a bracha that my daughters should be mekushar to the Rebbe. We had five daughters at the time. The Rebbe asked me in yechidus for each of their names and wrote down each one's name as I said it.



RABBI COUSIN AND FAMILY, 5730*

they will need to amputate the second one as well.

My sister Esther Leah sent me a letter requesting that I ask the Rebbe for a bracha for our aunt. Within a few hours of my writing in, an answer came back. The Rebbe said: "*Lehiza-her b'hadlakas neiros Shabbos Kodesh kodem hazman*—she should be careful with lighting Shabbos candles before the (required) time." I quickly wrote back a letter to my sister with the Rebbe's response and sent it with express mail.

My sister went to my aunt and relayed the Rebbe's answer and said: "You must be lighting candles after the *zman*." She confessed and cried, "Yes, sometimes things are so hectic and I light the candles after *shkia*. I promise that from now on I will always light them on time."

The next Tuesday when the doctor came with the medical students to look at her leg and continue with the procedure, he was amazed. He said, "What happened? The leg is becoming healthy again!" They continued to

monitor her for the next two weeks in the hospital, and then they sent her back home. She had to use crutches for a bit, but eventually, she healed completely. It was an unbelievable miracle. The Rebbe was on the other side of the world, how did he know that my aunt wasn't lighting Shabbos candles on time?! But of course, the Rebbe knew, and through that, he saved both of her legs.

I once asked the Rebbe in *yechidus* which Chassidus I should learn outside of the *sefer hayeshiva*. (Earlier, the Rebbe told me to learn perek 41 of Tanya.) The Rebbe told me that I should learn Derech Mitzvosecha and that I should learn every maamar twice, aside from the two long *maamarim* - *Shoresht Mitzvas Hatefilah* and *Ha'amonas Elokus* - which I was to skip. I found the material very fascinating, it really opened up my mind to many more concepts in Chassidus.

Another thing that I asked in *yechidus*, was whether I could start putting on Rabbeinu Tam tefillin. (In those days not everyone would put on Rabbeinu Tam from the age of bar mitzvah³.) The Rebbe answered that if I have a *geshmak* (enjoyment) in learning Chassidus I can start to put them on, and so I did.

The Neshama of Moshe Rabbeinu

I was quite invested in the weekly "Wednesday Hour" Released Time program, an hour of Jewish learning with Jewish children who were in public schools.⁴ I had quite a large group, and I was good at telling stories and entertaining the children.

My roommate on the other hand felt that participating in the Wednesday Hour disturbed him from

learning. Including travel to and from the schools, the preparations, etc., the whole ordeal could take a good number of hours and he felt that it took from the time that he could spend learning.

He wrote a letter to the Rebbe asking if he could be exempt from this duty, explaining that aside from the time that it takes away from his learning, he doesn't feel that it has a lasting effect on the children. "They only come to get time off from class and to receive prizes," he wrote. Additionally, he claimed that the responsibility burdens him during the rest of the week as well, further distracting him from his learning.

The Rebbe wrote back almost a full page of an answer to him, which read: "All of the *neshamos* in Gan Eden, including the *neshama* of Moshe Rabbeinu *a"h*, are envious of you that you can say Shema with a small child and they can not." Regarding that which he wrote that he doesn't feel that it has an effect on the children, the Rebbe wrote: "*Chazaka leta'amula she'eina chozeres reikam*—there is an assurance that hard work will not go to waste." Concerning the responsibility burdening his mind in general, the Rebbe wrote that it is not a result of the Wednesday Hour specifically, rather

it is a personality trait for a person to become distracted easily or not.

The Rebbe's words in that letter had a strong impact on me. The concept that Moshe Rabbeinu and all of the other tzaddikim and the Avos could be envious of my learning with a child, was eye-opening. Eventually, after I got married, the Rebbe sent me to London to work in Lubavitch House, but the Rebbe allowed me to decide what to be involved in. My decision to pursue chinuch was inspired to a great extent by this letter.

During the first few summers while I learned near the Rebbe, I was a counselor in Gan Yisroel in Swan Lake, NY. During the next few summers, I was sent on Merkos Shlichus. It was a very enjoyable experience to visit many different places and meet with local Yidden. I remember once being in Houston, and it was 105 degrees outside. We were walking around with big bags of *sefarim* and the heat was unbearable, but we were young guys and we tolerated it. It was difficult but very rewarding.

There weren't many kosher food items available in stores like there are today and the only item we could buy in local stores was canned sardines. At one point, someone raised a question about the kosher status of



REB AHARON COUSIN TEACHING AT BEIS LUBAVITCH IN 5723*.

the sardines as well. I remember the Rebbe mentioned it at a farbrengen and said, “This is the only thing that the bochurim can eat when they go on Merkos Shlichus, and they want to take this away as well.”

When we would come back from the trip, we would write a comprehensive report to the Rebbe of everything that we did and of all of the people that we met.

After being in New York for a few years, my father and my siblings wanted me to come back home and visit. They hadn’t seen me in four years and they wanted to see how I was doing. I got permission from the hanhala and made plans to travel home.

In *yechidus* for my birthday on 28 Nissan, I notified the Rebbe that I booked a ticket to go home by ship on 17 Tammuz. The Rebbe said that since I am traveling on a fast day, I should start to pack my belongings beforehand so it will be considered as if my trip started before the fast day. In adherence to the Rebbe’s instructions, I made a mental note in my head to pack on the Sunday before my trip which was scheduled for Tuesday.

On that Sunday (almost three months after the *yechidus*), a bochur came over to me and said Rabbi Hodakov is looking for you. I came to Rabbi Hodakov’s office, and he told me that there is a note from the Rebbe for me. The note read: “*Betach yas’chil arizas chafatzav vichadomeh lifnei yom gimmel*—Surely you will start packing your belongings, etc. before Tuesday.” Needless to say, I was blown away by the way that the Rebbe looked out for a “little bochur’s” travel schedule, while he had the entire world on his shoulders.

Before I left, the Rebbe gave me a bracha for a successful trip. In *yechidus*, the Rebbe instructed me to take a shlichus from Tzach that I would fulfill during my stay in England. I was sent to Leeds and Liverpool, where I

met with locals, sold Jewish books, put up mezuzahs, and engaged in other mitzvot.

Building A Family

During my visit, the Shemtov family, whom I was close with, suggested that I meet with my wife whom they knew from her involvement in arranging Bnos Chabad events and other programs in Beis Lubavitch in London. I wrote to the Rebbe asking about the prospective shidduch, and the Rebbe’s reply was: “*Yachol lehipagesh*—you can meet.”

After we got engaged, the Rebbe instructed me to spend another year in 770 before our wedding, saying that I should take everything off my mind and just concentrate on learning and davening.

Our wedding was scheduled for 8 Tammuz 5722*. My six friends who had been sent that year as the Rebbe’s first *talmidim hashluchim* to Brunoy, wrote a letter to the Rebbe asking if they could leave yeshiva to attend my wedding in England. For many weeks they did not receive any answer; then, three days before the wedding date, the Rebbe replied that two representatives could go. They made a raffle, and Bentzion Schaffran and Shimon Lazaroff won. They made the wedding very lively.

Before traveling to England for the wedding, I merited another *yechidus* with the Rebbe. Of course, one of the questions on my mind was what I should pursue after my marriage. Without me even asking, the Rebbe told me: “You should work in Beis Lubavitch. You don’t need to decide immediately what you will do, but you should work in Beis Lubavitch.”

Sure enough, that is what I did. I began teaching in the school during

the daytime, and at night I would go door to door raising funds for Beis Lubavitch. I would walk throughout the whole city, South London, North London, and all of the many parts. I walked so much that eventually I developed terrible pain in my legs. I went to the doctor and he sent me to the hospital where I started physical therapy. After that, we bought an old junk car that I was able to use to get around.

For the first month of Tishrei after I got married, I went to New York to spend the Yomim Tovim with the Rebbe. During that trip, I had a very special *yechidus* with the Rebbe, and the Rebbe wished me a mazal tov on my *chasuna*. After that, I continued to visit the Rebbe very often, at least once a year.

A Passion for Teaching

When I first started teaching, the Lubavitcher *cheder* in London had a total of five students. Eventually the school grew, and together with that I started teaching full days, although I was still doing the fundraising at night.

Baruch Hashem I had a lot of energy, and when the school continued to grow and had over 200 students, I was promoted to be the headmaster of the boy’s school, continuing in that position for many years.

The director of the school was Reb Aharon Dov Sufrin. Reb Aharon Dov would give reports to the Rebbe from all of the schools, and when I had a question for the Rebbe I would usually relay it through him.

On one occasion, I did ask the Rebbe for direction myself. In the school, there were English parents who wanted their children to be taught

in English, and there were also parents that spoke Yiddish and wanted their children to be taught in Yiddish. Thus, we were posed with a dilemma as to which language the teachers should teach in.

The children themselves didn't speak Yiddish. If we would translate the Chumash into Yiddish we would need to then translate it again into English.

At the next opportunity that I was in *yechidus*, I asked the Rebbe what we should do regarding this issue. The Rebbe told me that you must teach in the language that the children can understand. "Don't use the Chumash as a method to teach another language. If you want the children to speak Yiddish, you must speak with them in Yiddish at home, in the playground, or in the dining room." From then on we taught only in English. We would speak to the children in Yiddish as well, but that was only outside of the classroom.

One of the things that we implemented in the schools was a fold-over card with rules for each boy and girl to follow. It included things like wearing a school uniform, coming on time, always being neat and tidy, etc. When we sent it to the Rebbe for approval, the Rebbe was very pleased with it. The Rebbe said we should share it with other institutions so that they can use it as well.

than Lubavitch, and that the Lubavitch learning standards were not very high.

I knew that information was not true and that truthfully this fellow took his son out of the Lubavitch school only because Avigdor was subsidized by the government so school fees were minimal. I was disturbed by the false narrative that was spreading.

The next time that I was by the Rebbe in *yechidus*, 14 Shevat 5735*, I mentioned this issue that weighed on my heart. The *yechidus* was on a Sunday. On the Shabbos prior to that, the Rebbe spoke very strongly, in a manner that we had never witnessed before, about a certain person who printed fabricated and fallacious gossip about Lubavitch in the newspaper, saying that there are terror brigades in Lubavitch, Heaven forbid. The Rebbe spoke with great emotion.

When the Rebbe addressed what I had written about the rumors that were being spread in London, the Rebbe smiled and said: "*Oif mir redt men oich lashon hara*—About me people gossip too." The Rebbe then continued and said: "How ever high the standards of the school are, you should make the standards even higher, and you should discuss with your wife what to do, not with those that write the checks."

When I got back to England, I of course discussed with my wife what

we could do to strengthen the school's standards and reputation. One of the things that we came up with was to make a "public *farher*" event that would be attended by rabbonim and parents from throughout the city.

Each class was assigned a quota that they would be tested on. The youngest grade would be tested on all of the names of the parshiyos by heart. The next would be tested on all of the names of the *mesechtos* by heart. The next class would need to learn *Meseches Brachos* by heart, and so on.

The event was a huge success. The rabbonim, as well as the parents, were very impressed. From then on we continued to hold the public *farher* every year. The event became the "talk of the town," and would be featured in the local community newspapers.

To add entertainment to the event, we created a choir called "Mi Armi Admur" to sing niggunim. The choir was so successful that they eventually released their own tape. Naftali Cohen was the choirmaster, and there were about a dozen children that would sing in the choir.

It was my practice to visit each class once a week and test them on the subjects that they were learning. There was one particularly large class, which had twenty-eight students. I told them that when each one of them gets ten out of ten answers on the test

Rise to the Top

At one point, a certain parent from the Yekkish community decided to take his child out of Lubavitch and enroll him in Avigdor, which was a frum school, but the boys and girls were together in class and the students weren't taught much Torah at a very high level.

The fellow spread a rumor that Avigdor had higher learning standards

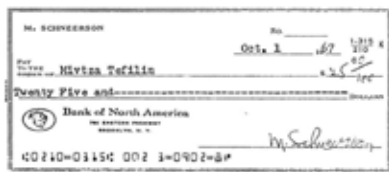


REB AHARON COUSIN STANDING IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN AT THE "PUBLIC FARHER," 5736.

* 5735-1975, 5736-1976



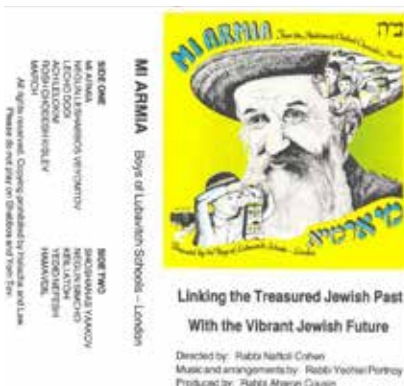
RABBI COUSIN, AT THE FOREFRONT OF MIVTZA TEFILLIN EFFORTS IN LONDON FOR CLOSE TO 40 YEARS, MANS THE 'TEFILLIN - MITZVAH MOBILE' IN 5730*.



A CHECK SENT BY THE REBBE IN 5728 TOWARDS THE PEULOS OF MIVTZA TEFILLIN IN LONDON



IN A LETTER TO RABBI COUSIN, THE REBBE ADDS LINES IN HIS HOLY HANDWRITING AT THE BEGINNING AND END, ENCOURAGING REB AHARON'S ACTIVITIES OF MIVTZA TEFILLIN.



THE TAPE "MI ARMIA ADMURA" PRODUCED BY THE CHOIR OF CHEDER LUBAVITCH OF LONDON IN MEMORY OF REB BENTZION SHEMTOV (PICTURED ON THE COVER), WHO WROTE THE TITLE TRACK OF THE ALBUM.

correct for three weeks in a row, they will earn a special trip. The students worked very hard to try and earn the trip.

Finally, there were three weeks in a row where they all got ten out of ten answers correct and they earned the trip.

The next week, when I came to test their class, all of the students got ten out of ten answers correct making it the fourth week in a row. I congratulated them on the wonderful achievement and told them that it was the first time in the school's history that this had happened. I promised them that I will make sure their trip will be even more special. Then, I asked the children where they would want to go on a trip. Each one yelled out the place that they wanted to go until I said you know what, I want to take you guys to the Rebbe!

The children all began to cheer and scream, they were all so excited. After a brief moment of dramatic commotion, I calmed them down and said, "I'm sorry boys, I would love to take you to the Rebbe, but it will be too expensive. It will cost one thousand pounds." I promised them, though, that I will take them on a good trip.

At the final dismissal, one of the parents came over to me and said: "My son told me that you would like to take his class to the Rebbe, but you will need a thousand pounds." "Yes," I replied. "I will give you the money," he said. Sure enough, the next day, he wrote me a check for a thousand pounds.

The truth is that I made a mistake, it would cost a lot more than just one thousand pounds. But, with Hashem's help, I fundraised the money and we made the trip happen. We took the group of twenty-eight boys to the Rebbe for two weeks!

From then on, I began to take a group of boys to the Rebbe every

year. One year, the Rebbe gave each of the boys a siddur in *yechidus*. After that, at the farbrengen, the Rebbe announced that all of the children under the age of bar mitzvah should come up to receive a siddur. Reb Leibel Groner asked the Rebbe if the boys from London should come as well, and the Rebbe said yes, so they were lucky to each receive two siddurim from the Rebbe.

At that farbrengen, the Rebbe instructed to sing a "Torah niggun," and someone began to sing "Tanu Rabbanan," which goes through all of the Mishnayos that start with a number. When it came to number thirteen, the room became silent and nobody knew what the correct Mishna was. The Rebbe then said, "Shloshe asar simanim benivlas oif tavor." When we came back to London, we made sure that all of the boys knew that niggun.

As I conclude to share with you my personal story and journey of becoming a Chossid of the Rebbe and having the distinct *zechus* to serve as a shliach of the Rebbe for many years, there is a message which I hope these stories give way to and help us all appreciate. Each one of us Chassidim need to realize the tremendous gift that we have, of being connected to our dear Rebbe, who looks after us like his own children. We need to thank the Aibershter every day for this wonderful portion that he put into our lot, of being the Rebbe's Chassidim. **1**

1. See "The Lamplighter from Lubavitch," Derher Shevat 5779.
2. Over the following years, Reb Aharon merited to receive a handful of letters from the Rebbe - See Teshuros from Dubravsky-Cousin 5758 and Teldon-Flinkenstein 5772.
3. See "The Great Debate," Derher Adar 5780.
4. See "Released Time," Derher Tishrei 5781.