



THE REBBE LEAVES FOR THE OHEL ON EREV SHAVUOS 5730. THE REBBE SUBSEQUENTLY GAVE PERMISSION FOR THIS PHOTO TO BE USED IN PUBLICATIONS

20 QUESTIONS - ONE RASHI

SHAVUOS 5730*

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ע"י בנם	טור 'לעבן מיטן רבי'ן הוקדש לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת
ר' יקותיאל יהודה	ר' שמואל ב"ר יהושע אליהו ז"ל
וזוגתו מרת פעסל לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו	ואשתו מרת שרה ע"ה בת ר' יקותיאל ומרת לאה הי"ד
רוהר	ת"נ צ"ב'ה'

Reb Zalmon and Mrs. Roselyn Jaffe merited tremendous kiruvim from the Rebbe over the years. Beginning in 5724, Reb Zalmon and his family would visit the Rebbe each year for the Yom Tov of Shavuos. Reb Zalmon wrote a detailed diary, in his unique style, of the time he spent in the Rebbe's presence and the Rebbe very much encouraged this endeavor. These are published in his "My Encounter with the Rebbe" series. The following are excerpts from Reb Zalmon's detailed description of his trip to the Rebbe for Shavuos 5730*:*

(The diary of the first part of this trip, up to Rosh Chodesh Sivan, was published previously in Derher, Weekly, Issue 15.)

The Shabbos Before Shavuos

Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar, Sivan 2, I had an *aliyah* in the Rebbe's shul thank G-d. At 1:30 the Rebbe held a farbrengen that went on until six.

During the second niggun, the Rebbe got so excited he jumped up to dance and waved his arms, conducting the tempo. When the Rebbe stands, all stand. Everybody standing, singing and jumping and the tempo getting faster and faster. It was impossible to keep up. Yet the Rebbe is egging me on, faster and faster.

During the course of this farbrengen, I had already said *l'chaim* to the Rebbe three or four times, yet, the Rebbe leaned over the head table and said, "Say *l'chaim*" and added, "*Du bahalst zich unter dem tish!*" (you are hiding under the table).

Yom Tov Meals with the Rebbe

Shavuos was now approaching and, once again, I had the zechus of being invited to partake of Yom Tov meals with the Rebbe [in the Friediker Rebbe's apartment¹].

The seating arrangements and the food were similar to the past few years. The routine was the same too. But this

year I had a good helpmate in my endeavors to make the Rebbe *freilich*. Rabbi [Chaim] Gutnick took my advice, followed my lead and a good time was had by all.

I remarked that Her Majesty the Queen was well represented, from Canada, from Great Britain and by Rabbi Gutnick who was a chaplain in Her Majesty's forces in Australia. The Rebbe said that Rabbi Gutnick had an even higher title - a Kohen.

At the outset of the first meal - the first night of Yom Tov - and recalling that the previous year I had earned good commission from the Rebbe for suggesting that we should continue to sing "*Ha'aderes v'Ha'emuna*" at 770 during davening, just as all Lubavitcher branches all over the world were still doing on Yom Tov, I declared to the Rebbe that I would like to discuss some business matter.

The Rebbe agreed to hear my proposition, but said I must not talk in English but in Yiddish, for many of the dozen or so guests could not understand English.

I asked why do we not sing "Hu Elokeinu" here at 770 during davening. The Rebbe said that he had not seen this song being sung at the Previous Rebbe's shul.

So I asked, "Did they sing it in Lubavitch?"

The Rebbe pointed to another rabbi who had been in Lubavitch. He said that they had not sung it in Lubavitch.

I offered, "That was Lubavitch of yesteryear, but today we live in a modern world where we need happy niggunim. Anyway, the entire world learnt to sing that song

from here, like in Manchester and Israel, but here they don't sing it?"

The Rebbe confided that even though he had not heard "Ein k'Elokeinu" being sung in his father-in-law's shul, "When I was in Berlin the first time, I did hear this song."

I had not been asking about "Ein k'Elokeinu," but "Hu Elokeinu!"

"Still," I added, "I have been here now for two weeks and have not heard them singing Hu Elokeinu!"

The Rebbe said, "That is your fault."

"I am only a soldier," I protested.

"If so, I am 'commanding' you to sing it," said the Rebbe.

I figured I would also put in a word for singing "Kalie Atoh" during davening, so I said, "In Manchester we sing 'Kalie Atoh' at the end of Hallel."

The Rebbe mentioned, "It is a song of the Alter Rebbe."

"So why is it not sung here?" I asked.

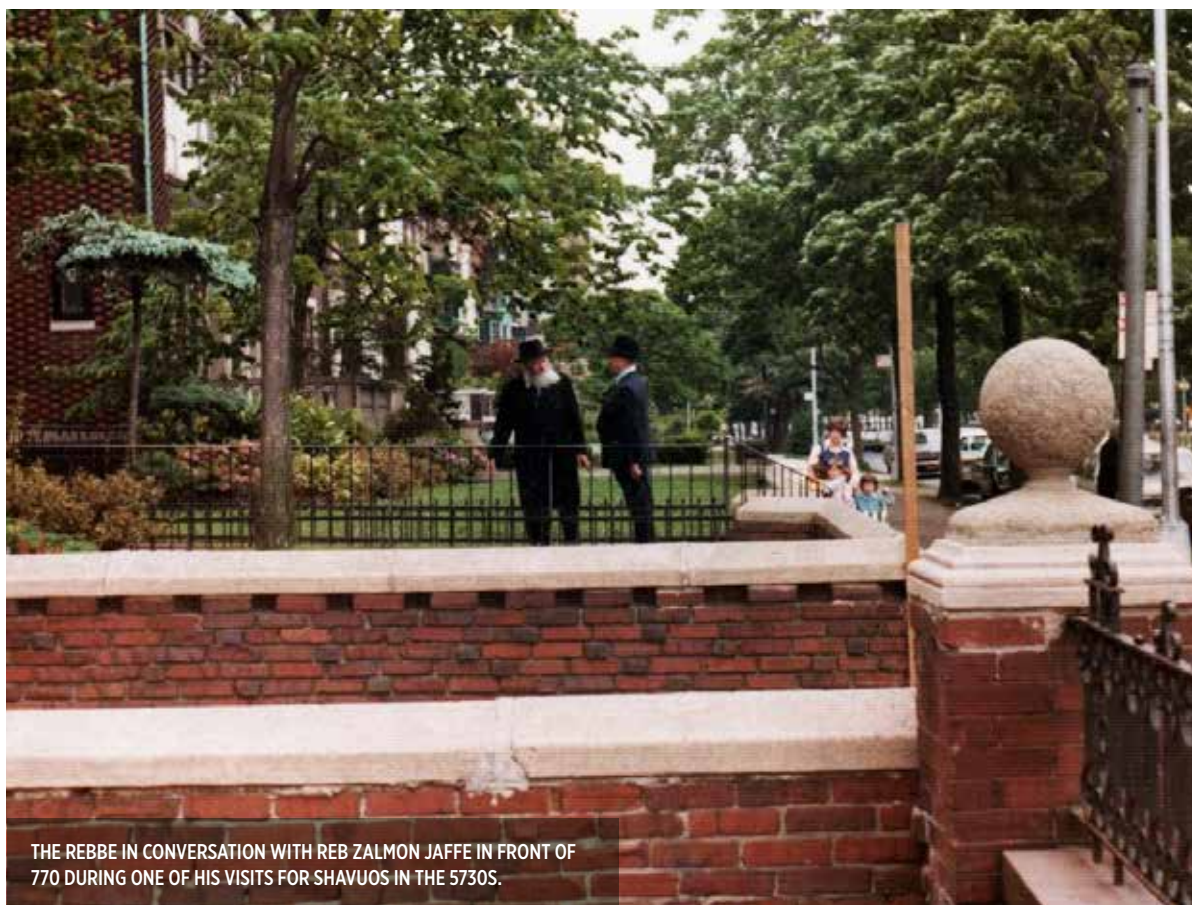
"Tomorrow, we should sing this song too," said the Rebbe. "And those who are here now, if they will be there tomorrow, should help you."

So it was settled and I was to be allowed to commence singing during davening tomorrow.

I did very well, I must admit. In the event, I started the first tune on Shavuos morning. I felt like Nachshon ben Aminodov who was the first to jump into the Red Sea before it split. The congregation hesitated quite a while before they joined in. Later, one fellow severely reprimanded me for singing in shul without the Rebbe giving the signal. I explained that the Rebbe had already given me permission previously, and I certainly would not do anything against protocol. He apologized profusely.

During the meal of the first day, I thanked the Rebbe "for helping me with the niggunim, but it was difficult."

The Rebbe commented that it would be much easier on the following day and indeed it was.



THE REBBE IN CONVERSATION WITH REB ZALMON JAFFE IN FRONT OF 770 DURING ONE OF HIS VISITS FOR SHAVUOS IN THE 5730S.

The trouble was that I was then inundated with requests to sing various other niggunim. Obviously, I had to decline. One cannot, or should not, overdo a good thing. I was quite satisfied with what was achieved.

I still continue the custom of starting to sing a niggun when the Rebbe leaves the shul, so the Rebbe is sung out; but instead of helping me by joining in and being *freilich*, I get blank stares and a few smiles of approval and even disapproval. Fortunately, my old friend, Rabbi Shemtov, and my new friend, Zvi Fisher, had pity on me, and we danced and sang together for the Rebbe.

Well, to revert back to meals with the Rebbe. Every meal was *freilich*. I sang many niggunim and told a few good jokes. I had just concluded what I thought was a good joke, when the Rebbe remarked that he did not like the joke at all, as I had related something detrimental about the Jewish people. Therefore, I must immediately express something good about Jewish people, now and at once. This I did, and the Rebbe raised his glass and wished me *l'chaim*. At a subsequent farbrengen I thought of something very good to say about Jews. This time the Rebbe made me say *l'chaim* in a very loud voice.

At one point during the meal on the first day of Yom Tov, the Rebbe said to me, "You have to sing a niggun."

I proposed, "Bli neder tonight I will sing two niggunim."

"Sing now at least a *halbeh* niggun (half a niggun)," said the Rebbe.

So off we went with another song.

When we finished singing, the Rebbe said to me, "And now say a complete *l'chaim*."

I then asked the Rebbe a question on Rashi. The Rebbe always stresses that Rashi wrote his commentary so even a five-year-old can understand. I have yet to find a five-year-old who could answer this question:

G-d commands the kohanim: "So shall you bless the children of Israel 'omor lohem' (say to them)."² In Rashi's commentary of this verse, he gives three explanations to the words of 'omor lohem'. But, instead of including all three explanations in one entry under a shared heading, as Rashi usually does when having more than one interpretation, there is a separate heading for each of the three explanations.

The Rebbe promised to discuss this question at the next farbrengen on Shabbos.

At the last Yom Tov meal, I told the Rebbe that Rabbi Gutnick wanted to give me an answer on the Rashi; but

I did not want to hear it because I prefer to hear the Rebbe's answer.

The Rebbe said, "It is not a contradiction. Especially as Rabbi Gutnick is himself a *kohen*." Rabbi Gutnick gave an answer, but it seems that the Rebbe had something else in mind.

This last meal on Shavuos had a very happy atmosphere.

We sang the words from the final verses in the Rebbe's perek of Tehillim (chapter 69) to the tune of "Dayenu." The Rebbe had been quoting these verses at every farbrengen this year, "Kee Elokim yoshiya Tzion."

The Rebbe was exceptionally pleased with this new song and, his face beaming, asked whose inspired idea this was³. Someone explained that some of the yeshiva boys had hit on this brilliant idea.

The Rebbe said, "They are very appropriate words."

Rabbi Gutnick said that since the tune was from "Dayenu" which means "enough," I am asking of the Rebbe at this auspicious time that it should be *dayenu* to all *tzorrus!*

The Rebbe answered, "*Amen, kein yehi rotzon, (so should be the will)*."

In due course, this niggun became "top of the pops."

The Shabbos After Shavuos

Our last Shabbos at 770 this year, the Shabbos after Shavuos, was Parshas Nasso, Sivan 9. Again, we had the *zechus* of a farbrengen with the Rebbe, from 1:30 prompt until five, thus keeping up my reputation of there being a farbrengen on almost every Shabbos I am present at 770.

It was extremely *freilich*. At one point, even though I had already wished the Rebbe *l'chaim* twice, the Rebbe stated that I was not *yotze* with the *l'chaims* of my grandsons.

Then the Rebbe started with the "question" on Rashi which I had presented to the Rebbe at the meal.

Actually – and typically of the Rebbe – I had asked but one question on this *possuk*, but the Rebbe had many more questions on that same Rashi.

The Rebbe began by saying that one question had been asked on a Rashi, "but when the Rashi is learnt as a five-year-old should learn it, we will see how many questions there are."

The Rebbe started on the questions. When the Rebbe



THE REBBE SHAKES THE HAND OF 4-YEAR-OLD YOSSEI LEW BEFORE THE JAFFE FAMILY'S RETURN TO ENGLAND AFTER THEIR VISIT IN SIVAN 5728.

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got to question number eight on this same *possuk*, he stopped to ask me, “How many questions is that?” I answered correctly. At eleven, again, “how many?”

At fourteen, I answered, “fourteen,” but somebody else shouted, “fifteen.”

The Rebbe said, “We will have an auction, does anybody say sixteen?” (My answer was correct.)

And so the Rebbe kept on asking more questions on the same *possuk* until he had asked twenty unique questions on that one Rashi! Then the Rebbe started on ONE approach to the Rashi, which answered all twenty questions – brilliant! One of the twenty questions on this Rashi:

Why was *omor* “*lohem*” (say to them - the Kohen to the people) in the plural, whilst *yevarechecha* (you shall bless - the Kohen shall bless one Jew) in the singular? The answer the Rebbe gave was that the kohen had to concentrate with great *kavana* to feel that he was blessing each one individually and collectively.

(I later told the Rebbe that this was no *chiddush* (nothing new) as the Rebbe had told me many years ago that he spoke to everyone individually at a *farbrengen*. This

remark pleased the Rebbe.)

The Rebbe then spoke very strongly once more on the theme of “Who is a Jew?” He mentioned a Reform rabbi who made conversions which consisted only of a certificate. This piece of paper, which was given to the applicant straight away without any formal instruction, stated that this man was now a Jew. Even a *bris* was not required, or indeed performed, as this Reform leader did not believe in shedding blood, and he had pity on this poor fellow. So this man’s children or grandchildren would in time, G-d forbid, be able to marry one of your children or grandchildren while they were not even Jewish. We must also consider them and the future.

During the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe handed me a bottle of vodka. “A little for now, a little for the plane, and the rest for Manchester.” Shmuel [Lew - Reb Zalman’s son in law] also received a bottle to “give to students.” We did very well indeed.

The Hand Shakes

One Shabbos, Yossi (6) and Mendy (4 ½) were standing at the doorway of 770 when the Rebbe arrived. He

said “Good Shabbos” to Mendy, who gave the Rebbe his hand to shake whilst answering “Good Shabbos.” The Rebbe also shook hands with Yossi. A large argument and debate ensued on whether the Rebbe had given his hand first or if the boys were rude and had stuck out their hands. Was it correct or was it wrong, and so on. Well, the following day we had just returned to 770; we were all standing at the doorway of 770 when the Rebbe happened to be coming along. The Rebbe touched his hat, smiled at Roselyn and me, and firmly and smartly shook hands with Mendy and Yossi.

Farewell Yechidus

Monday night, Sivan 11, the climax of our visit had arrived. At 9:40, Roselyn and I entered the Rebbe’s room for *yechidus*.

Initially, our *yechidus* with the Rebbe was to be on Sunday, Sivan 10. However, there were so many people coming to see the Rebbe this time that the following night, Monday, was also declared a *yechidus* night! This was extremely unusual, two consecutive nights! I had never heard of such a thing.

So we had our *yechidus* on Monday evening. Roselyn and I had very rarely been lucky to enter so early. Four or six in the morning, yes, but before 10:00!

Actually, some people were delayed so we took their turn. We received a splendid greeting from the Rebbe, who remarked with a twinkle in his eye that we had come well prepared with pads and pens. I replied that we had come thousands of miles for this interview and every word of the Rebbe was so important that we could not afford to miss anything.

“Are you needing to write 1,000 lines or 100 lines?” asked the Rebbe.

“No,” I replied, “but why should I take any chances?”

The Rebbe requested that I keep writing to him every two weeks as hitherto. Since we were leaving from 770 for home the next night at 9:30, I asked whether we would miss Maariv.

The Rebbe told us that he would be visiting the Ohel again, so Mincha would be at 8:30 and maariv ten minutes earlier than usual. “My wife will be delighted to see me ten minutes earlier,” added the Rebbe.

The Rebbe mentioned that he had not answered every one of the twenty Rashi questions. He would give these later on. The Rebbe advised us to come next year again

for Shabbos Mevorchim, “because you are always wanting a *farbrengen*.”

I told the Rebbe that “A Chossid must have no pity on his Rebbe, and not give in, if it concerns Torah.” I pointed out that the Rebbe had spoken for fourteen hours over the Shavuos period, “That is a great deal of Torah.”

“Ah,” said the Rebbe, “You say that after the event, not before.”

I admitted that I could not understand everything at a *farbrengen*.

“Yes,” said the Rebbe, “They are not words one uses every day in business.”

(This reminded me of the time I told the Rebbe that in the English translation of his Pesach - or other - messages, some English words were so difficult to understand that one needed a dictionary handy. The Rebbe said that, “The purpose of my letters is not for the study of English.”)

[After talking about the broadcasts of the Rebbe’s *farbrengens* to Eretz Yisroel] I said that the *farbrengens* were received exceedingly well in London (in Manchester, too, now) except that the Rebbe was not there in person and also that it was an awkward time, 2 a.m. until 9 a.m.; otherwise it was very nice indeed, with comfortable chairs and tables, refreshments, no crush, etc.

“Shah!” said the Rebbe. “Don’t tell anyone here; they will all want to go to London for the *farbrengen*! Still”, the Rebbe added, “it is a pity I keep everybody up all over the world.”

The Rebbe said he was very pleased with my grandsons, Yossi and Mendy Lew, who had attended every service at 770. I remarked that, while here, a great impression had been made on them that will last them all their lives.

“No, no,” said the Rebbe. “They will come plenty of more times.”

After a stay of one hour and ten minutes, we left the Rebbe’s presence.

One friend from England, Hershel Peckar, went into *yechidus* after we left. He came out flushed and excited. The Rebbe had given him \$100 to buy his wife (whom he had left at home in London) a gift! ❶

1. This is where the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin would eat the Yom Tov Seudos until 5731.

2. Bamidbar 6:23

3. See Derher Weekly, Tazria 5771, “Yud-Aleph Nissan Niggunim.”