

לחיזוק ההתקשרות לכ"ק אדמו"ר זי"ע
ולזכות הילדה שיינדל תחי'
לרגל יום הולדתה י"ג תמוז
נתרם ע"י ולזכות הוריה
הרה"ת ר' שלום דוב בער וזוגתו מרת
חיה מושקא
שיחיו
שוחאט





צב זינד דעם הבנה

Gimmel Tammuz Farbrengen with
RABBI MOSHE WOLBERG

In preparation for Gimmel Tammuz, *A Chassidisher Derher* sat down for a farbrengen with Rabbi Moshe Wolberg, maggid shiur at the Central Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Kfar Chabad.

Gimmel Tammuz is a time when Chassidim reflect on a personal and pnimiyus'dike connection with the Rebbe. Can you share your perspective on the personal relationship of a Chossid with the Rebbe?

In the beginning of Parshas Yisro, on the words "וישמע יתרו"—Yisro heard," Rashi asks - what did Yisro hear that motivated him to leave Midyan and venture out into the desert to join *inei Yisroel*? Two things: *Krias Yam Suf* and the war with Amalek. The well-known question is: If the amazing miracles of *Krias Yam Suf* were insufficient to get Yisro to convert to Yiddishkeit, does it make sense that the unwarranted attack of Amalek convinced him to make the move? Seemingly, the fact that Yidden are always targeted unfairly should have had the opposite effect.

The truth is that the miracles of *Krias Yam Suf* were so tremendous that they should have had an enduring impact on all the nations of the world and their relationship to Yidden and Yiddishkeit. After such a display of divine power, no nation should have ever dared lift a finger against them. However, a few weeks later the world witnessed that it was possible for a nation to attack the Yidden despite the miracles of *Krias Yam Suf*! Yisro realized that as long as he remained an outsider, he would never retain the same excitement and passion for Hashem even after seeing tremendous wonders and miracles. The only way to remain connected is through becoming an insider.

The same is true about the Rebbe and Lubavitch. Everyone can witness and experience the Rebbe's *mofsim*, learn the Rebbe's Torah, and be in awe of the Rebbe's tremendous impact on the world. But as long as you are on



THE YESHIVA OF STATEN ISLAND.

the outside, it can remain cold and unfeeling.

You were not raised in a Lubavitcher family. Can you share with us what brought you to become a Chossid of the Rebbe?

We lived in the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn, several miles away from Crown Heights, and because Oholei Torah was the only *cheder* with organized transportation from our neighborhood, my father, who hailed from a Gerrer family, sent me to learn there. Eventually I moved on to Yeshivas Torah Vodaas but since we were still relatively close to Crown Heights and I had Lubavitcher friends in the neighborhood, I would sometimes walk to 770 on Shabbos to attend the Rebbe's *farbrengens* and have the opportunity to say *l'chaim* to the Rebbe. I always felt especially attracted to the Rebbe.

A year before my bar mitzvah, I started learning in the Yeshiva of Staten Island where Rav Moshe Feinstein was the *rosh yeshiva*. With the help of Reb Meir Roness who arranged *shiurim* in Tanya for *bochurim* in many non-Lubavitcher yeshivos, a small group of us started listening to Rabbi Yosef

Wineberg's Tanya *shiurim* on the radio. Later he sent *bochurim* to give *shiurim* in person, such as Sholom Duchman, Sholom Ber Groner and Zalman Lipsker. These *shiurim* obviously strengthened my connection to Lubavitch and I continued to come to 770 for weekday *farbrengens* with the *hanhala's* permission.

As I grew older, my personal connection to the Rebbe intensified and I felt more attracted to Chassidus and Chassidim. Though I started identifying with the ideas of Chassidus from an intellectual standpoint, more importantly, I started feeling that my *neshamah* belongs in Lubavitch. Every time I came to the Rebbe's *farbrengens* I was so taken by everything the Rebbe said that I came to the realization that this is where I want to be.

In addition to seeing the Rebbe at farbrengens, did you ever go into yechidus during this time?

In preparation for my 16th birthday, which is close to Pesach, I requested to have a *yeichidus* with the Rebbe. In *yeichidus* I asked various questions regarding my learning and also if I should transfer to a Lubavitcher yeshiva.

The Rebbe's response was that this

question would only be relevant in the summer since it was not a good idea to change yeshivos in the middle of the *zman*. In addition, there is a well known directive from Chazal that one should learn במקום שלבו חפץ ("where his heart desires"). So in a few months I should make my own decision.

As it turned out, I continued learning in Staten Island the following year. The next year when I was again in *yechidus* for my birthday, I wrote about my difficulties in making a decision about where to learn and came to the conclusion that I don't really know what "my heart wants." Therefore, I asked the Rebbe to make the decision for me.

The Rebbe answered, "This is a *din* in Gemara, brought down as *halacha* in Rambam. Certainly this is relevant to everyone. You must make your own decision." And then concluded, "We should hear from you *besuros tovos*."

This concluding *bracha* from the Rebbe gave me the impression that he was expecting to hear very soon that I decided to learn in a Lubavitcher yeshiva because this was in my best interest, and I notified my friends that I was transferring to Lubavitch soon.

I spent the summer months of *bein hazmanim* learning in Morristown and kept an open mind whether to go on to Lakewood for the next *zman*. Although I found the level of learning to be on par with the yeshiva I came from, as the *bein hazmanim* came to an end I was compelled to move on to Lakewood.

One night, the *mashpia* Reb Meilich Zwiebel farbrenged and spoke at length and very passionately about the difference between a Chossid and one who is not yet a Chossid. A Yid could look like a portrait; perfect in learning and *yiras Shamayim* without a blemish to be found. But a portrait is not alive. A Chossid on the other hand is a living organism of Yiddishkeit. He may have flaws here and there, but his Yiddishkeit is alive and dynamic.

This idea spoke to me and deep

down I knew that I wanted to stay. Elul 5732* was when I finally made the official move "to Lubavitch." I was 17 years old.

At that point I changed the *kesher* of my tefillin, started davening the Chabad *nusach*, and keeping all Chabad *minhagim* like a full fledged Lubavitcher. Immediately my connection to the Rebbe and everything about Chassidus became much, much deeper as a result.

All those years that I contemplated moving to Lubavitch, my main motivator was to finally "belong" to the Rebbe. It wasn't about the specifics of what I would learn and where the level of *lomdus* was greater, whether I would become an *oved* or a *maskil*. It was all about becoming "the Rebbe's."

That's why I felt a special connection to the *bochurim* I was learning with. Not necessarily because they were such great *lamdanim*, but because I wanted to be part of the Rebbe's *bochurim*. It's difficult to explain, but that's the fact.

Several months after my decision to remain in Morristown, I merited that the Rebbe himself gave me a clear message that I now "belonged" to him.

My father would wear tefillin on Chol Hamoed and naturally I did the same from when I was bar mitzvah. That first year after officially changing

to Lubavitcher *minhagim* I was conflicted with not wearing tefillin on Chol Hamoed. For some reason I was weary of not doing so and I wore tefillin *betzinah* during Sukkos and Pesach.

When I was in *yechidus* for my birthday that year, among the topics I wrote in my *tzettel* was my question regarding wearing tefillin on Chol Hamoed.

In those years, when a *bochur* came to the Rebbe for *yechidus*, he would give the Rebbe two letters. The first was his own personal *tzettel* and the second was a sealed envelope with a report from the *hanhala* describing their assessment of where the *bochur* was holding in learning and *yiras Shamayim*, etc.

When I handed the Rebbe both my *tzettel* and the envelope from the *hanhala*, the Rebbe first read through my personal *tzettel*, and as he read the report from the *hanhala* the following conversation ensued.

The Rebbe: "You learn in Morristown?"

Me: "Yes."

The Rebbe: "And you wear tefillin on Chol Hamoed?"

Me: "Yes."

The Rebbe: "In Morristown they wear tefillin on Chol Hamoed?!"

Me: "No."

At this point the Rebbe gave off the



REB MEILECH ZWIEBEL FARBRENGING WITH BOCHURIM IN MORRISTOWN IN THE 5730S*.

* 5732-1972, 5730s-1970s

impression that the entire situation was bizarre. As if to say, what place was there for a *tomim* learning in Tomchei Temimim to be wearing tefillin on Chol Hamoed!

The Rebbe concluded that going forward I should not wear tefillin on Chol Hamoed and that I should consult with a rav regarding the fact that I did so in the past.

I remember walking out of that *yechidus* elated! Very, very happy! I felt the Rebbe was telling me that I now “belong to him” so why was I even contemplating keeping other *minhagim* that weren’t connected to Lubavitch. This was exactly what I had been craving for all those years and now I knew I was the Rebbe’s.

Every *bochur* in the Rebbe’s yeshiva belongs to the Rebbe. The same is true for every child who learns in the Rebbe’s *mosad*. And the same is true for anyone who becomes a member of *anash* and observes the Rebbe’s *horaos* and *darkei haChassidim*. It doesn’t matter how much we feel or how much we know, we are true insiders and belong to the Rebbe.

TWO ERAS

In the current painful reality of galus how is it possible to feel this truth that we really “belong to the Rebbe”?

Everything can be found in Torah and we can try to find some context for our present situation after Gimmel Tammuz in the Rebbe’s Torah.

The final *maamar* the Rebbe edited, published and personally distributed to thousands of men, women and children, was the famous *maamar* of *ואתה תצוה*. Similar to how the Rebbe described the *maamar* לפני as the Frierdiker Rebbe’s spiritual *tzavaah* to our generation, clearly this *maamar* is the Rebbe’s guidance to us as we



RABBI WOLBERG AS A BOCHUR IN 770.

navigate the darkness of the current *galus*. Every year we learn the *maamar* and find new depths in its content, but I believe the *dibbur hamaschil* of the *maamar* itself already presents a context in which we can understand our current situation.

The *possuk* *ואתה תצוה* is the beginning of Parshas Tetzaveh, which is the only *parshah* in Chumash Shemos, Vayikra, and Bamidbar, that does not mention the name of Moshe Rabbeinu. There are various explanations and *remazim* in connection with this anomaly, but the main idea is that when Moshe Rabbeinu defended *bnei Yisroel* after the *העגל* he declared “ואם אין מחני נא מספרך”—If you will not forgive them, please erase me from the Torah.” Even though Hashem forgave

the Yidden, Moshe’s words had an impact and his name was erased from one *parshah* of the Torah.

The Rebbe explains that although the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu’s name is not mentioned in Parshas Tetzaveh is in order to emphasize his absence, at the same time most of the *parshah* references Moshe himself. The very first words *ואתה תצוה* already refer to Moshe Rabbeinu in a more intimate way, and there are multiple *remazim* to him in the form of the *gematria* of Tetzaveh and the *gematria* of the amount of *pesukim*. This is because this *parshah* expresses the essence of Moshe Rabbeinu, which transcends his name. Moshe Rabbeinu is defined and most manifest by his sacrifice for *bnei Yisroel*.

Simply put, even when Moshe

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Rabbeinu can't be found in a revealed sense, he is present in a more essential and pertinent way.

So there are two ways Moshe Rabeinu is expressed in the Torah. There is the way he is in the rest of the *parshiyos*, and the way Moshe is expressed in Parshas Tetzaveh.

You can think to yourself that the way we had the Rebbe before Gimmel Tammuz is similar to the way Moshe Rabbeinu is revealed in the rest of the *parshiyos* and the way the Rebbe is with us today is similar to the way Moshe Rabbeinu is expressed in Parshas Tetzaveh. While the revelation of Moshe's name is not present, he is expressed in many other ways.

Many of the Rebbe's *inyanim* from before Gimmel Tammuz are clearly manifest today in much stronger ways than ever before. For example, the overwhelming amount of stories of *mofsim* and how the Rebbe directly guides so many Yidden today in such amazing ways, in my opinion far

surpasses anything we heard about before Gimmel Tammuz. Last year during the famous week-long Zoom farbrengen of the Kinus Hashluchim, the endless flow of current post-Gimmel Tammuz stories shared then is testimony of something so spectacular, I don't recall anything like it in the good days.

Another amazing concept is the phenomenon of *hiskashrus* today. The fact that so many Chassidim, *bochurim*, women, and girls, who never saw the Rebbe *begashmiyus* are so *mekushar* to the Rebbe in a real and genuine way is another expression of how the Rebbe is truly here.

HISKASHRUS TODAY

I'd like to present a rhetorical question that should not *chas veshalom* be taken out of context. One can think to himself that today after Gimmel Tammuz we have the Rebbe's *sichos* and

maamarim, so many hours of audio and video recordings of farbrengens, *sichos* and *tefillos* with the Rebbe; the Rebbe's shlichus continues to grow with historic proportions and most importantly the Rebbe continues to communicate with us in so many ways. Of course, the tremendous והעלם והסתר is unprecedented and every extra day in *galus* is excruciatingly painful, but technically speaking, what exactly are we missing as Chassidim?

My most cherished memories of the Rebbe are the times when we danced with the Rebbe. Especially on Simchas Torah during *hakafos*, when we danced with the Rebbe we felt uplifted and "lost" within the Rebbe. It felt like we were being elevated with עונני שמיה. And this had nothing to do with high levels of *avodah* or any specific preparations. Just being there in the room and paying attention to the Rebbe, one was transported to a different reality. We literally lost ourselves. When the *niggun* ended there was this palpable



RABBI WOLBERG HANDING THE REBBE HIS 'PAN' BEFORE ROSH HASHANAH 5741*.

“IT TAKES FOCUS AND DEDICATION TO PLACE YOURSELF IN A MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL STATE OF FEELING THAT THE REBBE IS SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO ME. TO DO SO ONE MUST KNOW THAT THE REBBE IS WITH US TODAY JUST LIKE BEFORE GIMMEL TAMMUZ AND CONSTANTLY THINK ABOUT THIS IN A PNIMIYUS’DIKE WAY”

feeling of landing back in *olam hazeh*.

This phenomenon would happen sometimes during a *farbrengen* where you felt that you truly “belonged to the Rebbe.” It came completely from above. These were the moments, more than anything else, that gave us that iron-clad feeling and pride of belonging to the Rebbe.

This is the type of feeling that goes beyond personal accomplishments or titles one may accumulate in life. When I served as a *maggid shiur* in Manchester, there was a certain Yid I would visit often to put on tefillin with. Walking down the street with the bag of tefillin in my hand was a very proud moment for me. What was I doing already? Something that every young Lubavitcher kid can do! But I was doing something “the Rebbe’s Yid” does. I belong to the Rebbe.

Of course, one needed to apply this inspiration into the minute details of

life, even then. The *yetzer hara* was not born on Gimmel Tammuz. All the challenges one experiences today in *avodas Hashem* were around then as well in the same way. But the feeling of “losing yourself in the Rebbe” was a gift we had then from above which is much more difficult to experience today. This is the crucial thing we must work on today; to find ways to “lose yourself in the Rebbe.”

It is doable, but it takes work. For example, one can watch a video of a *farbrengen* today—which is extremely important—but at the same time feel like an outside observer. It takes focus and dedication to place yourself in a mental and emotional state of feeling that the Rebbe is speaking directly to me. To do so one must know that the Rebbe is with us today just like before Gimmel Tammuz and constantly think about this in a *pnimiyus’dike* way. One needs to *derher* this idea well through

thinking about it often, because the realities of our world imply a very different situation. But we must know that this is the truth and this is a feeling that can certainly be achieved today just like before Gimmel Tammuz.

I’d like to share a story with you that for me, more than anything else, expresses the fact that the Rebbe is with us today and that *bochurim and yungerleit* today can have this same connection to the Rebbe.

After one of my former *talmidim* got married, he had some lucrative offers to remain in his childhood community together with his parents and in-laws, both of whom indicated that they preferred the young couple settle close to home. He is a *Chassidisher yungerman*, very talented and I’m sure he would have accomplished special things had he stayed there, but he was very conflicted. On the one hand he did not want to “disrupt” the family harmony, but on the other hand he felt strongly that the Rebbe wanted “his *mechunachim*”—products of Tomchei Temimim—to go out on *shlichus*.

It’s important to note that both he and his wife are too young to have any memories of the Rebbe before Gimmel Tammuz.



KUNTRES PURIM KATAN 5752, CONTAINING THE MAAMAR “V’ATA TETZAVEH,” THE LAST MAAMAR THAT THE REBBE EDITED AND PERSONALLY DISTRIBUTED TO EVERYONE.



He consulted with me and although I fully appreciated his dilemma, we came to the clear conclusion that the Rebbe wants his *temimim* to go out on shlichus and this was definitely what he should pursue. He moved out on shlichus and was very successful for a while but then, due to some unforeseen circumstances, needed to leave the shlichus and found himself back at square one. He had the offers and encouragement of family to settle close to home, but this time with the added consideration of a growing family with young children.

Once again he consulted with me, and although I was not analyzing his situation from any high perspectives of *avodah* or *bittul*, we came to the conclusion that the Rebbe would want him to go on shlichus. Shortly thereafter he found another shlichus opportunity and is *baruch Hashem* very happy and successful where he is today.

This to me is one of the greatest manifestations of the Rebbe's presence among us after Gimmel Tammuz and how we today can "belong to the Rebbe." A young couple who were barely toddlers on Gimmel Tammuz leaving the many offers of settling

comfortably near home to go out on shlichus because this is what the Rebbe wants.

YOU ARE A CHOSSID

Regarding Moshe Rabbeinu we learn that his priority was Yidden above all else, even more important than Torah. The same is true regarding the Rebbe. Although the Rebbe's *mosdos* are very important to him and Likkutei Sichos and the publication and dissemination of his Torah is certainly very important to him, the Rebbe's main priority is you.

This is the truth and we need to reconfirm to ourselves that this is the truth and feel it.

And it's not like one needs to do something great in order to "belong to the Rebbe." The fact that you are a Lubavitcher, the fact that you are enrolled in the Rebbe's *mosdos* already makes you "the Rebbe's." This is not a title or achievement we need to work on. It's a fact about us we need to tap into.

It doesn't matter if one is a shliach or a *baal esek*, it is an ongoing *avodah*

for each person to constantly remind himself of the fact that he "belongs to the Rebbe" and should conduct his affairs accordingly. The titles are irrelevant. The most important thing is to be aware of וועמעןס ביסטו? Who do you belong to?

Someone who belongs to the Rebbe seeks to grow in learning and *yiras Shamayim*. The Rebbe's shiurim of Chitas and Rambam must be etched in stone and non-negotiable.

Several years ago Reb Yoel Kahan was speaking to a group of *bochurim* that spent Tishrei by the Rebbe and elaborated on the idea that the Rebbe's grandfather, Harav Meir Shlomo Yanovsky, was a renowned rav and Chossid, yet he was always described as a "zitzer by the Rebbe Maharash." Before the establishment of Tomchei Temimim it was not uncommon for young men to spend several years learning in Lubavitch after their wedding. Harav Meir Shlomo did so and from then on, his ultimate legacy and the way we refer to him is the fact that he was a "zitzer"—he "belonged to the Rebbe."

The best way to strengthen this *hergesh* and awareness is by *valgeren zich tzuvishen Chassidim*—to make an effort to *farbrenge* with fellow Chassidim and to emphasize the commonality between us, the fact that we all "belong to the Rebbe."

Nevertheless, despite the fact that we all can be true Chassidim today and have a true connection with the Rebbe, the current situation is a dark and painful *galus*, the polar opposite of the truth of *Elokus*. A Yid and *galus* are polar opposites. It's not where we belong.

The Rebbe is truth and all about revealing the truth of *Elokus* in the world. Each one of us must do our part in revealing this truth in the world and with this we will merit to be reunited with the Rebbe *begashmiyus* with the *geulah ha'amitis vehashleima*. **T**