

DOES THE REBBE KNOW MIE?

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*Hisvaadus
Chassidim
in honor of
Gimmel
Tammuz*

*A farbrengen with Rabbi Shlomo Zarchi,
recounting some of his earliest memories of
the Rebbe, reflecting on the everlasting impact
of being in the Rebbe's presence, and sharing
insight on how to achieve the same today.*



לע"נ
התינוק ישראל נח ע"ה בן יבלחט"א הרה"ת
ר' מנחם מענדל שיחי'
נלב"ע אדר"ח תמוז ה'תשס"ה
ת"נ צ"ב ה'

נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חנה ומשפחתם
שיחיו
קארנפעלד

My earliest memories of the Rebbe begin when I was a very young child. My family arrived in the United States from the D.P.

camps in Germany shortly after Pesach 5711*, when I was four years old. Soon after settling in New York my family had a *yechidus* with the Rebbe.

During the conversation, the Rebbe asked me a question on Chumash. The next year, when my family was in *yechidus* again, the Rebbe asked me the names of the three *malachim* that came to visit Avraham after his bris.

In the early years of the Rebbe's *nesius* when I was growing up, there weren't many children in the crowd that would come to 770. There were about four or five of us.

After the monthly Shabbos Mevarchim farbrengen, all of us children would congregate near the Rebbe's door and dance there. Sometimes, the Rebbe would come out and encourage our singing and there were times when the Rebbe took some of the cake that was on the table at the farbrengen and gave it to us.

Oftentimes at the farbrengen on Motzei Simchas Torah, the Rebbe called up the children to the *bima* and asked someone to recite "*Hamalach Hagoel*" with us. Sometimes he also asked Uriel Zimmer, who was fluent in many languages, to sing "*Ha'aderes V'haemuna*" with us, and he would add "to who, to who," each time in a different language.

In 5713*, it became the standard practice that children would not have a *yechidus* with the Rebbe for their birthdays. Instead, at the Shabbos Mevarchim farbrengen before a child's birthday, he would go over to the Rebbe after the *maamar* and notify the Rebbe of his birthday. My father's birthday and mine are in close proximity to one another, so my father brought me together with him for his *yechidus*. When he told the Rebbe about my birthday, the Rebbe said, "We made up, only after bar mitzva."

In the winter time, the Rebbe would farbreng in the upstairs *zal* (instead of the *shalash*, where the farbrengens usually took place). Because the space there was so tight, it was difficult to get from where we were standing to the Rebbe's place. Instead, we would go out of the room and come around through the *cheder sheini*, and as soon as you walked through the doorway, you were right near the Rebbe.

Once, I came over to the Rebbe's place to notify the Rebbe of my *yom huledes*. Standing on ground-level and the Rebbe sitting on an elevated platform, I found myself looking straight up at the Rebbe, and the Rebbe looking downwards at me. I froze and became speechless. In general I suffered from a speech impediment, but here I could not even utter a word.

Reb Shmuel Levitin, who was nearby, told the Rebbe my name. The Rebbe said: "He will say over Chassidus *besafah berurah*—with clear speech."

Years later, regarding my stutter, the Rebbe told me that I should remember that wherever I go the *Aibershter* is with me, and this will cause me not to be afraid of anything, thereby diminishing my stutter.

On the second day of Shavuot, the Rebbe would farbreng for many hours. I remember as a child staying at *kos shel bracha* on Motzei Shavuot past five o'clock in the morning, and the Rebbe asked me: "You are still up so late?!"

Another special memory I have from my childhood, is when I once got pushed around quite a bit during a farbrengen, and I began to cry. The Rebbe saw me crying, and told me to stand near his chair. I remained there for the rest of the farbrengen.

Starting from elementary, I learnt at Lubavitcher Yeshiva on Bedford and Dean. Oftentimes on our way home from school on the school bus, if the Rebbe happened to be standing outside when we passed 770, he would encourage us and we would dance on the bus.

Raising Chassidishe Bochurim

In 5722*, I started to learn in Reb Yoel's class at Bedford and Dean.

Reb Yoel would farbreng with us, sometimes late into the night. These were opportunities that he used to educate our way of thinking, and help us mature. In a certain sense, he shaped our approach in *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe.

I remember how he often spoke about the way the Rebbe cried while saying *Min hameitzar* before blowing *tekios* on Rosh Hashanah. He said that the Rebbe was crying as a result of our *machshavos zaros*.

Many of us used to frequently ask Reb Yoel to explain how we should prepare for going into *yeichidus*, and what to write in our *tzetel*. There were *bochurim* that would speak about their desire to have a long *yeichidus* with the Rebbe discussing their situation and receiving personal guidance.

At one farbrengen deep into the night, Reb Yoel began to cry as he reprimanded us for this tendency. He explained that Chassidim of old would oftentimes not even write anything in their *tzetel* to the Rebbe, aside from their name and mother's name along with a request for a *bracha*. They did not want to take the Rebbe's time.

(As a side note, I once asked Rabbi Mentlick what he writes in his *tzetel* before entering *yeichidus*. He told me that he merely writes his name and mother's name and requests a *bracha*. Rabbi Sholom Ber Lipskar also tells of an instance when he went into *yeichidus* and wrote in his *tzetel* nothing more than his name and mother's name. The Rebbe addressed

him for a relatively lengthy amount of time, and answered many questions that were bothering him.)

The entire world is false, Reb Yoel explained. The only *daled amos* of truth are in the Rebbe's holy room.

The proper preparation for *yeichidus* is to immerse oneself in the Rebbe's truth. When we write our *tzetel* for *yeichidus*, we only need to tell the Rebbe

who we are and the Rebbe will understand everything about us, as it says, "תן לחכם ויחכם עוד, הודע לצדיק ויוסף לקח" (in other words: הודע לצדיק—make yourself known to the *tzaddik*, and he will show you the proper way).

Before our *yeichidus*, we should learn a *maamar* thoroughly, Reb Yoel said, and on the day of the *yeichidus* we shouldn't eat. In fact the Rebbe asked Reb Leibel Groner to let the *bochurim* enter *yeichidus* before others because they were fasting.

In the Rebbe's Presence

During the years that I was a *bochur*, there was only a small crowd of us American boys. During *tefillos* when the Rebbe davened in the *shalash*, we used to stand behind the Rebbe.

When the Rebbe would signal that we should sing a particular *niggun* in davening or the like, we were the ones that would be able to see what the Rebbe was asking for, and would notify the crowd. Because there weren't that many people, most of the crowd were far from the Rebbe's place, and could not see what the Rebbe was asking for.

One of the signs that there would be a farbrengen on a week that was not Shabbos Mevarchim, was when the Rebbe would ask for *Haàderes Vehaemunah* to be sung.

I remember several times on Rosh Hashanah when the *chazzan* would do *chazzanus*, the Rebbe took a *maamar* out of his pocket and began learning.

Starting in 5724* we would take turns walking behind the Rebbe on his way home from 770 on Friday nights. Once, on his way home the Rebbe turned around to the *bochur* that was there and said: "If you are going to escort me, I will need to escort you back." From then on we began going in pairs of two.

When the Rebbe would pass by the church on Brooklyn Avenue, he would cross the street diagonally. When the Rebbe arrived at home, we could always see the Rebbe go over to the window (from the inside) and make sure that it was locked.

I remember that there was once a *bochur* who was invited for *seudas Shabbos* on Friday night to a family that lived across the street from the Rebbe and Rebbetzin. While he was passing by the house after the meal, he noticed the Rebbetzin standing outside on the sidewalk.

The Rebbetzin called him over and asked if he knew what was going on in 770. He replied that he didn't. The Rebbetzin then asked him if he could check what was going on there, explaining that the Rebbe usually arrives home by that time, and she was concerned because he hadn't arrived yet.

On his way to 770, the *bochur* saw the Rebbe walking home. He quickly ran back to the Rebbetzin and told her

that the Rebbe is on his way and everything is alright. He then turned away to leave, so he would not have to be seen by the Rebbe.

The Rebbetzin told the *bochur* that it is not polite to leave a lady by herself on the streets of New York late at night. The *bochur* of course listened, and as the Rebbe neared, he quickly slid away.

During the time that I was learning in 770, my brother was sent on shlichus to Australia. While he was there, he unfortunately became sick and needed to undergo a surgery.

Upon returning from the shlichus, the Rebbe gave each of the shluchim a *kuntres*. The Rebbe gave me one too, to give my brother who was then in the hospital.

On the following Shabbos by the farbrengen, the Rebbe told the *bochurim* who returned from Australia to say *l'chaim*, and the Rebbe turned to me as well and told me to say *l'chaim* for my brother.

On one occasion in *yechidus*, the Rebbe told me that the Chassidus which is learned in *sefer hayeshiva* should be used as well for thinking before davening. This way the learning and the davening will be connected.

Such was the Rebbe's opinion in general. Davening and learning are and should be connected with one another. This is in contrast to the ways of the *ovdim* in previous generations. They were accustomed to learning different *hemsheichim*, and when it came to davening they would take out a *maamar* from their pocket which they would always daven with.

The Rebbe told me in that *yechidus* that every *maamar* has a connection to davening. Every *maamar* touches on the same general theme of *kamus* and *eichus*, *yesh* and *ayin*, *gvul* and *bli gvul* etc., expressing how that which is supernal and lofty outweighs that which is tangible and apparent to the human eye as more significant.

A Deep Impression

In 5723*, when my class was old enough to move out from Bedford and Dean, there was a disagreement among the *bochurim* whether to enroll in 770 or the yeshiva in Newark. There were those that argued that it is challenging to learn in 770, whereas in Newark we would sit and learn. In the end, some *bochurim* went to Newark, and some of us, myself included, went to 770.

At the end of 5724*, a discussion arose again among our group, whether to move from 770 to the yeshiva in Montreal. After Rebbetzin Chana's *histalkus* on Vov Tishrei 5725*, the Rebbe notified that there will be a farbrengen every Shabbos, and the Rebbe davened at the *amud* every day. This solidified

my decision that I would be staying in 770, and I could not be happier that I made the right decision.

Those of us who stayed for that year merited experiencing many special, once-in-a-lifetime moments which we cherish until this day.

Observing the Rebbe daven at the *amud* day-in-day-out, was an other-worldly experience; witnessing the highest level of connection with Hashem. There were many times throughout the year when the Rebbe cried at certain parts of davening, often during *Shema Koleinu* and *Hoshiva Shofteinu*.

A time when we heard the Rebbe cry very loudly was during Selichos on Asarah B'Teves. There was quite a small crowd by davening, and the Rebbe banged on the *shtender* consecutively as he wept.

Another time was on 21 Kislev, after the Rebbe took *yechidus* the entire night. Rabbi Krinsky came into the *zal* at about six o'clock in the morning and asked us to daven Shacharis with the Rebbe. When the Rebbe davened that day, he cried throughout the entire davening.

In those years, the Rebbe's farbrengens were of a more personal and "*heimishe*" nature. We were able to sense that the Rebbe was addressing us directly. This was different from the nature of the farbrengens in the later years when one could mistakenly think the Rebbe was mainly addressing global issues.

The Rebbe's farbrengens really molded us as *bochurim*. There were a few farbrengens in particular that stood out and had a special impact on me.

One farbrengen that I found particularly foundational was that of Yud Shevat 5722*, when the Rebbe spoke at length about a *nossi* being *nitzutzo shel Yaakov Avinu*. Just as all of Yaakov Avinu's children reflected him, "*mitaso sheleima*," so too everyone in the *nossi's* generation are an extension and reflection of the *nossi*.

Another moment that stands out was when the Rebbe cried as he repeated the words of the Mittlerer Rebbe, "It is already deep into the month of Elul, and we still haven't collected the leeches." The Rebbe explained the lesson that we learn from this in *avodas Hashem*: Leeches extract blood, with blood symbolizing enthusiasm. Not only do we need to rid ourselves of enthusiasm from non-holy things, but also enthusiasm of *kedushah* that doesn't stem directly from Hashem's directives.

The Rebbe bemoaned that after an entire month of Tishrei, we still haven't been affected in this manner.¹

A similar expression was when on Shabbos Bereishis 5718*, Reb Yochanan Gordon asked the Rebbe where davening would take place. When the Rebbe said downstairs (in the *shalash*), Reb Yochanan replied: "But downstairs is cold and dirty."

At the farbrengen later that day, the Rebbe quoted these words, explaining them to mean that even after the *avodah* of

Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, it is still “*kalt un shmutzik*—cold and dirty.”

Warmth is a sign of life, the Rebbe explained. Cold on the other hand represents a lack of life. Not only is it cold here on earth (“downstairs”), not only is there a lack of *chayus* in *kedushah*, it is also dirty, reflecting the opposite of *kedushah*. At this point in the *sicha*, the Rebbe laid his holy head on the table and cried profusely.

In those years, we clearly felt how the Rebbe was our “*mashpia*,” so to speak. The Rebbe’s farbrengens would lift us up from our own personal situation and bring us into a fresh reality.

Especially as *bochurim*, we would use every opportunity to be around the Rebbe, and that is what made us into Chassidim.

On Mondays and Thursdays for example, when the Rebbe would listen to *krias haTorah* in the *zal*, we would all make sure to be there. After *krias haTorah*, the Rebbe would lean onto the *bimah* and look around the room, gazing strongly at every *bochur* with his holy eyes. The Rebbe’s look was so strong, it felt as though his holy eyes would swell outwards.

I remember how at the farbrengen of Simchas Torah 5723* before *hakafos*, the Rebbe cried when he spoke about the *yetzer hara* not allowing a Yid to be affected by the *Atah hareisa lada’as*, and *Le’oseh niflaos*.

On Simchas Torah the previous year, 5722*, the Rebbe said a lot of *l’chaim* at the farbrengen. At one point, the Rebbe stood up and said that a *beis din* of three people should give a *psak din*

that all of the Yidden in Russia should be able to leave Russia.

Later, the Rebbe told Reb Berke Chein, who had recently arrived from Russia, to take off the hat he began wearing upon his arrival in America, and instead he should wear his *kasket*, as he did previously. In the meantime, while someone went to the house he was staying at to retrieve his *kasket*, he wore a piece of cloth over his head. Throughout the farbrengen, the Rebbe told Reb Berke to say *l’chaim* very frequently.

The Rebbe then announced that everyone that has a personal thing to ask for should bring *mashke*, and roughly a hundred people went to the store (after Yom Tov concluded) and bought *mashke*. From each bottle the Rebbe poured some into his cup and said *l’chaim*.

The Rebbe gave many *brachos* then and told many to begin learning Chassidus *adaita de’nafshei* (while applying it to oneself).

Some of the older Chassidim were concerned about the Rebbe’s health, and went over to ask that he refrain from saying more *l’chaim*. Reb Shmuel Levitin, Reb Berel Rivkin, Reb Zalman Shimon Dvorkin and others went over. The Rebbe said to them: “What the Rakshiker Rav said I don’t understand, and what Berel Rivkin said he himself doesn’t understand.” Rashag came over to hear what was going on and the Rebbe asked him, “You also want to get involved?”

After saying *l’chaim* with many people, the Rebbe wiped his hand across his forehead, and began to speak a *sicha* in *nigleh* as a contribution to the Kinus Torah after Yom Tov.

Towards the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke about the dangers of *hanachos ha’olam* (a worldly, mundane attitude).



REB SHLOMO ZARCHI (TOP ROW, FAR RIGHT) AS A YOUNG BOCHUR, STANDING ALONGSIDE THE REBBE AT THE TZEIS'CHEM L'SHALOM FOR THE GUESTS WHO CAME FOR TISHREI 5723*.



One expression that was particularly memorable was when the Rebbe told of a yungerman who came into *yechidus*. *Yechidus* the Rebbe explained, is when one *yechida* goes into another *yechida*.

“Asks one *yechida* to the other if he has a set time for learning, and nonchalantly he answers: ‘No, I am too occupied with earning money to buy furniture.’ And this is someone who sports a full beard, a Tomim!” the Rebbe exclaimed. “He had *mesiras nefesh* in Russia. At the same time, when he goes into *yechidus*, he says with a genuine innocence that he has no time for learning because he is too busy making money for non-essential luxuries. And this same *yungerman*, when we give out *mashke* to those that take upon themselves an additional set time of learning, he pushes to the front.”

Another vivid memory I have is when the Rebbe said the *maamar Balayla Hahu* 5720*. My bar mitzvah was shortly before Purim that year. On Purim the Rebbe said the *maamar* and cried very much as he spoke of the difficulties of *galus*.

Whenever the Rebbe said a *maamar*, Reb Yoel would have us *bochurim* sit down the next day, and we each needed to repeat a part of the *maamar*.

When the Rebbe spoke, he wasn’t simply teaching us Torah. The Rebbe was bringing *Elokus* down into this world through the words that he spoke.

There is an explanation on the words of “*Vaye varech Dovid es Hashem leinei kol hakahal vayomer Dovid*.” The word “*vaye varech*” can be translated to mean that Dovid brings down *Elokus*. Although “*leinei kol hakahal*”—in the eyes of people, “*vayomer dovid*”—it seems as though Dovid is merely

speaking, in truth however he is bringing down *Elokus* into this world, and the words he speaks are just the vehicle.

The same is true in regards to the countless hours that the Rebbe spent teaching us Torah through the *sichos* and *maamarim*. The Rebbe was refining the world and infusing it with *Elokus*.

Also Chazarah?

Before Yud Shevat 5726*, Reb Yoel lamented to Rabbi Hodakov that the work of repeating and transcribing the *sichos* was becoming too much for him to handle alone.² He asked if he could be provided with a team that would assist him in his efforts.

Rabbi Hodakov subsequently assigned several *bochurim* to join Reb Yoel in his holy work. Reb Leibel Schapiro, Reb Ephraim Piekarski, Reb Sholom Ber Levitin and I were called upon.

A few days after Yud Shevat, Rabbi Hodakov called us into his office. He told us that the Rebbe noticed at the farbrengen that we were appointed to help with *chazarah* and asked that we come over during the Shabbos farbrengen (15 Shevat) to receive a bottle of *mashke*.

We were all about 17-18 years old at the time and did not feel comfortable going over to the Rebbe. We asked Rabbi Hodakov if he could go over for us instead, to which he responded: “No, the Rebbe wants you to come over.”

We all went together during the Shabbos farbrengen to

receive a bottle of mashke from the Rebbe. Reb Sholom Ber Levitin told the Rebbe in a hushed tone as one speaks before the Rebbe that we had started helping with *chazarah*. The Rebbe asked: “Ah?” After Sholom Ber repeated what he said in a louder voice, the Rebbe continued: “Which *chazarah*? When *chazarah*?” He explained that we were helping Reb Yoel. The Rebbe said “*L’chaim v’livracha*, you should have *hatzlacha*.”

At first, we thought the Rebbe was talking to the whole group. But then, the Rebbe turned to a second *bochur* and asked: “Why is there another *bochur* here?” and the same conversation repeated with each of us. The Rebbe was smiling widely all through the conversation. To one of us, the Rebbe said: “Again *chazarah*? More *chazarah*?” It was clear that the Rebbe wanted each of us to say, loudly and clearly, exactly what it was that we were taking upon ourselves.

Reb Yoel would stand on the Rebbe’s right in those years. When we turned to go to our places, the Rebbe said: “*Be’ali-yaso shel baalim*,” meaning that we should stand with Reb Yoel. We stood there for the rest of the farbrengen. Later in the farbrengen, the Rebbe said *l’chaim* with all of our parents and wished them to have *nachas* from us.

Investing In Proper Talmidim

After I became a *chosson*, I merited to have a *yechidus* with the Rebbe. The Rebbe had told me to learn for *semicha*

before my wedding and asked me where I was up to in that process. I responded that I still hadn’t learned *Hilchos Treifos*. The Rebbe took out a calendar, had a look at it and said that if I finish my studies 7 or 8 weeks after my wedding, it’ll still be considered as if I had done it before.

The Rebbe went on to tell me that my pursuit should be to learn Chassidus with *bochurim*. Without delay, I began teaching at Hadar Hatorah.

After our *chasunah*, my wife and I had a *yechidus* and we told the Rebbe that we were ready to be sent on shlichus. Once again, the Rebbe told me that my role is to learn Chassidus with *bochurim* and added that 770 takes priority for me (“has a *din kedimah*”).

The Rebbe continued and said: “What do you think, you will go to Australia and have *mesiras nefesh*? You will be here with *mesiras nefesh* like Australia.” I then asked if I would be considered a shliach or not. The Rebbe said: “If you will do your work with complete dedication (“*bemesira venesina*”), it will be a shlichus like Australia.”

A year or so later, on Yud-Aleph Nissan 5732* the Rebbe announced the founding of 70 new institutions. I very much wanted to open one of the 70 *mosdos* with a Chabad House of my own. I felt that being in yeshiva was not the right fit for me, I was still young and I wanted to exude my fresh energy as a part of the Rebbe’s “taskforce.”

I wrote to the Rebbe explaining my strong desire, and did not receive an answer for quite a while. Then, one day out of the blue I received the following answer:



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM160783 (23 TISHREI 5752)

האומנם לדעתו יגיעה אשר תלמיד תומכי תמימים יה' תמים כדרוש אינו נוגע לכללות הענין דשנת השבעים?! לכתבו שאין בו חיות - זהו מצד חלל השמאלי ולא מצד הענין שבו הוא עוסק."

"Do you really think that efforts for a student in Tomchei Temimim to be as he should is not relevant to the general idea of *shnas hashivim*? Regarding what you write that you are not motivated, this comes from the evil inclination, and not from the work you're involved in."

At this point I finally understood that this was the shlichus the Rebbe had in mind for me.

Throughout my years as a *mashpia* in 770, I rarely wrote about my work to the Rebbe since all of the reports went through the *hanhala*. One of the few instructions the Rebbe did give me in regards to the yeshiva was that if a *bochur* is having a negative impact on a group of others, he should be warned several times. If he still does not listen, he should be expelled.

The Rebbe said: "יחיד ורבים הלכה כרבים", meaning, when there is a question of precedence of an individual or a group, the group overrides the individual. The Rebbe added, however: "Because your nature is one of *kiruv* (*ish hakiruv*), you shouldn't be the one to expel the *talmid*, instead it should be the *hanhala*."

On three occasions when I went by the Rebbe to receive *kos shel bracha*, the Rebbe gave me a bottle of *mashke* and said that I should help *bochurim* find their *shidduchim*. I also know that sometimes the Rebbe would send people to me, saying that they should seek my help in this regard.

It is worthy to note, that on the last Sunday that the Rebbe gave dollars, 26 Adar I 5752*, I went by and the Rebbe gave me an extra dollar and said, "You should make good *shidduchim*."

The Rebbe is Here!

On Simchas Torah 5727* the Rebbe told a fascinating story that happened 200 years earlier in the year 5527*, during the time that the Alter Rebbe stayed near the Maggid as a *meshoreis*, a personal assistant.

When the Alter Rebbe walked into the sukkah, the Maggid said to him: "Close the door so nobody will come in, take this inwards and in a settled manner, you should not become overwhelmed. The Rebbe is coming." The Baal Shem Tov then entered the room in his physical body although it was seven years after his *histalkus*.

The Alter Rebbe later explained that it was in the merit of his staying in Mezritch as a *meshoreis* to the Maggid, that enabled him to see the Baal Shem Tov for the first time.

A *meshoreis*, the Rebbe explained, is one who personifies "lo yomush metoch ha'ohel"—he never leaves his Rebbe's court. But how could this be attributed to the Alter Rebbe who was only with the Maggid for merely three years?

The Rebbe said that because the Alter Rebbe left Mezritch to Liozna in the shlichus of the Maggid to spread Chassidus, therefore he constantly remained with the Maggid.

This is the *hergesh*—feeling of a Chossid, the Rebbe continued. Although he may not be with the Rebbe physically at all times, through carrying out the Rebbe's shlichus it is within reach that one becomes a *meshoreis*. Wherever he goes, the Rebbe is with him, and he can see the Rebbe physically.

The above *sicha* teaches of the achievability to live with the Rebbe on a personal level even after the event of *histalkus*. This reminds me of the *sicha* of Shabbos Parshas Vayechi 5747*,³ where the Rebbe touches on the immense energies we are empowered with by virtue of the fact that the Friediker Rebbe's body as well remains physically with us in *galus*.

The Rebbe spoke about the proclamation that we make after finishing each *sefer* in the Torah, "Chazak, chazak, venischazek." These words of strength must have a connection to the *sefer* after which we recite them, especially with the *parsha* that we read at that time, and even more specifically with the last *possuk* which we read right before making this proclamation.

The Rebbe asked: How can it be that we finish the first *sefer* in the Torah discussing the passing of Yosef Hatzadik, and that he was buried in Mitzrayim—the lowliest place on earth? It would seem that this is quite the opposite of a message of strength—"Chazak."

The Rebbe flipped the narrative completely, explaining that this *possuk* actually expresses the pinnacle of strength and encouragement from the entire *sefer* Bereishis.

Before the Yidden entered the real hardships of *galus* Mitzrayim as told in Sefer Shemos, they needed a tremendous reinforcement to be able to withstand those trials and tribulations, and remain steadfast in their service of Hashem.

Throughout Sefer Bereishis, we read stories of the *Avos*, a guiding light to their children, as well as Yaakov Avinu's prophecy that we would be redeemed from *galus*. All of this offers a tremendous amount of *chizzuk*. But the climax is expressed right here, in the final *possuk*.

Yosef is buried together with the Yidden in Mitzrayim, staying with them physically in a fully intact body for many generations. And to amplify this message, we announce: "Chazak, chazak, venischazek."

"The same is true regarding the Friediker Rebbe," the Rebbe continued. "He could have asked to be brought to Eretz Yisroel, but instead he chose to stay together with his Chasidim in the United States, and this is what keeps us strong and gives us the energy to keep steadfast in our *hiskashrus*, going in the ways that he taught us."



REB SHLOMO ZARCHI STANDING TO THE RIGHT OF REB YOEL AT THE REBBE'S FARBRENGEN.

Does the Rebbe know me?

There are many *bochurim* nowadays who struggle in maintaining what they think is a tangible connection with the Rebbe. All these years after Gimmel Tammuz, they find it hard to feel the Rebbe's presence in their lives.

The truth is, this sentiment is not new to today only.

When I started working in yeshiva, *bochurim* would frequently ask me if the Rebbe knew them. "Of course the Rebbe knows Reb Dovid Raskin and Reb Yoel and those that are close," they said. "But does the Rebbe really know me? I am just another regular *bochur*. How can it be that the Rebbe knows me, when I am only one in such a large crowd of people?"

I asked one of these *bochurim*: "When was the last time that you were present for *krias haTorah* on Monday and Thursday?"

"When was the last time that you stayed while the Rebbe gave *kos shel bracha*? Do you use every opportunity to be around the Rebbe, or do you just lay in bed?"

"If you want the Rebbe to know you, and you want to feel a close connection to the Rebbe, you need to invest yourself into 'knowing the Rebbe' as well."

This *bochur* indeed started to hang around and the next time the Rebbe distributed *kos shel bracha*, the Rebbe wanted someone to come back, so he called this very *bochur* by name, asking him to call the fellow back!

This story is just one example demonstrating that the

Rebbe indeed knows us, but in order for us to feel the connection, we need to apply ourselves.

Even before Gimmel Tammuz, unfortunately there were those that lived in their own minds and didn't pay proper attention to the Rebbe.

When the Rebbe said the *maamar* of *V'atah Tetzaveh* 5725*, there was someone who yawned very publicly while the Rebbe was speaking. The Rebbe said: "I was up an entire night thinking about the meaning of *Ve'atah tetzaveh*, and they sit at the farbrengen and sleep."

There were several times that the Rebbe said at farbrengens that there are those who are here physically but spiritually they find themselves elsewhere, and there are those that are not physically here, but are here spiritually.

The exact same thing is true today after Gimmel Tammuz, when we don't see the Rebbe physically. We should not fool ourselves and think that when we saw the Rebbe physically it was any easier to be connected.

If one wants to be connected, if one wants to "know the Rebbe" and feel that "the Rebbe knows him", it is their responsibility to apply themselves into the Rebbe's world. If a person learns the Rebbe's Torah, thinks about the Rebbe, goes to the Rebbe's Ohel, and immerses himself in the Rebbe's world, he will feel a genuine connection to the Rebbe today just as before.

May Hashem help that very soon we be reunited with the Rebbe, in the physical sense as well, *teikef umiyad Mammosh*.

1. Simchas Torah day 5723, Toras Menachem Hisvaduyos vol 35 p. 160.
2. See "Retaining Chassidus—Part II," Derher Adar II, 5776.
3. Sefer Hasichos 5747, p. 249.