

Interview By: RABBI LEVI SHEMTOV
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To the Last Detail

THE REBBE'S CARE AND ATTENTION IN
A YOUNG COUPLE'S LIFE-JOURNEY



AN INTERVIEW WITH
RABBI SHMUEL LEW

RABBI PINNY LEW



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לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ת ר' יעקב בן הרב שמואל
יוסף ע"ה גרינבוים
נלב"ע מוצאי שבת קודש פרשת
ויחי יעקב ט"ו טבת תש"פ
תנ"צ'ב'ה
ע"י אשתו ביילא רי שא ובנו מנחם
מענדל גרינבוים ומשפחתו שיחיו

The Shidduch

The Frierdiker Rebbe describes in a letter how the Rebbeim treated *temimim* as family, including attention to their shidduchim (Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz, vol. 12, p. 214). I was *zoche* to receive a great many *kiruvim* from the Rebbe, especially when it came to my shidduch and marriage. The shidduch was shepherded by the Rebbe at every step, from start to quick finish. We also merited that the Rebbe was our *Mesader Kiddushin*, though he had formally ended the practice. In fact, we were the last to have this privilege.

In a previous Derher, I shared about my path to Lubavitch, as well as the delightful years I spent as a *bochur* in Montreal, and later, after 5722, in 770.

Circa Lag Bomer 5722, a shidduch was suggested for me with Hinda Malka Jaffe from Manchester, UK. Her father, Mr. Zalmon Jaffe, was a well-known businessman, activist, and chossid.

Although his family had Chabad roots, Mr. Jaffe's connection with the Rebbe matured only later in life, under the guidance of Reb Bentzion Shemtov. Nonetheless, over the years he developed a very close connection to the Rebbe. He was tasked with numerous missions, and merited a great many *kiruvim* and letters from the Rebbe. He lived to bring joy to the Rebbe, as anyone who read his annual 'yoman' publication 'My Encounter With The Rebbe' knows quite well.

He was devoted to carrying out whatever the Rebbe requested of him. At the Rebbe's behest, he was elected President of the 'Shechita Board', the primary layman body for Jewish life in Manchester. Through his influence in the community numbering 30,000 strong, he accomplished much for Yiddishkeit, reporting to the Rebbe every step of the way.

Growing up in such a house, it was only natural for his daughter Hinda Malka to take a leadership role in the activities of B'nos Chabad. When she reached the age of shidduchim, she was quite set on marrying a Lubavitcher *bochur*, with whom she could devote her life to the Rebbe's *shlichus*. For such a *bochur* they would have to search beyond the British Isles. With that in mind, her brother's friend asked if I would be open to the idea.

After getting my parents' approval to explore the shidduch, I approached Reb Dovid Raskin—as all shidduchim for the bochurim in 770 went through him.

Then I asked the Rebbe:

האם להתעניין בשידוכים בכלל או לא? ובהצעה זו בפרטיות או לא?

1) Should I start taking interest in shidduchim at all or not? 2) Should I [look into] this specific suggestion or not?

The Rebbe responded in the affirmative, drawing an arrow on each question.

Meanwhile, my future father-in-law was busy arranging a

charter flight from Manchester to New York, due to land on the last day of Sivan. Following the unmistakable influence of the previous year's inaugural flight¹, they were again filling 118 seats with Britons, giving them the rare opportunity to spend time with the Rebbe. During their 17-day stay, they would have the opportunity to participate in the Rebbe's farbrengens on Shabbos Parshas Shelach and Korach, as well as the large farbrengen celebrating the Frierdiker Rebbe's redemption on Sunday night, 13 Tammuz. They were also each allotted a private *yechidus* with the Rebbe.

An Excerpt from Mr. Zalmon Jaffe's Diary

Our son Avrohom met us at the airport and imparted to us all the latest flows and events about '770.' He kept interspersing his remarks with the name of one special friend, Shmuel Lew, who seemed to be the paragon of all virtues...

"Anyway," I interrupted, "What about it?" Well, Avrohom wanted to arrange a meeting between this Shmuel and [Hindy]. Roselyn said that on no account and under no circumstances would she consent to or allow this meeting. "She is only eighteen years of age and there is plenty of time for a Shidduch."

During the whole of the three weeks that we were in Brooklyn, Roselyn was subjected to the most extreme



REB ZALMAN JAFFE WITH HIS GOOD FRIEND REB BENTZION SHEMTOV, HEADING TO THE AIRPORT FOR THE SECOND CHARTERED FLIGHT TO THE REBBE

pressure, by Shemmy [Rabbi Bentzion Shemtov, who had connected the Jaffes with the Rebbe] and Avrohom, that she should allow this meeting to take place. "What harm would it do?" "They might not even like each other," and so on...

Almost at the end of our stay in New York - we were due to leave for home on the following Wednesday - Roselyn was at long last prevailed upon to invite Shmuel for Friday night's Shabbos dinner but - at the last moment she canceled the invitation.

Meanwhile, there was an undercurrent of great activity going on with Rabbi Shem Tov and Avrohom, whispering and plotting in corners. I heard later that they also involved the Rebbe...

At that Friday night's dinner, Shemmy, who had made Kiddush and followed this with a few Schnapps, 'took the chair.' The lights had fused and we were sat around the candle-lit table... In his opening speech, he flayed Roselyn for her obstinacy and obduracy. He condemned her unreasonable attitude which prevented two young people who, in Shemmy's estimation, were an ideally suited couple - from even being allowed to meet each other. Avrohom was the second speaker - his theme was very similar to that of the 'Chairman'.

Under this concentrated attack, Roselyn relented. She consented to [Hindy] seeing Shmuel on Saturday night. Roselyn thought to herself: "We are leaving on Wednesday, in three or four days' time, so it seems fairly safe now to let them meet each other."

"A SHORT TIME"

I was assistant Head Counselor in Camp Gan Yisroel that summer, but on the Rebbe's advice, I came in for that Shabbos.

Our first time meeting was on Motzei Shabbos. We went on the Staten Island Ferry, which my father-in-law dubbed "the 'Lubavitcher Shadchonus Express' (or, in our case, 'Express Shadchonus')."

My father-in-law related: "At the grand farbrengen for Yud Gimmel Tammuz, which took place Sunday night in 770, the Rebbe handed me some *Lekach* (cake), indicating that I should hand it to my daughter. (Rabbi Zalman Shimon Dvorkin explained to me that this signified a blessing for a Shidduch.) This pleased me very much, but I obviously did not expect the Rebbe's Brocha to be fulfilled with so much haste and speed."

At that memorable farbrengen, the Rebbe related the story of a chossid who asked the Rebbe Rashab: What is a chossid? The Rebbe Rashab replied: a chossid is a *'lamterntchik'*

(lamplighter). The Rebbe went on to explain at length the lessons to be learned from every detail of the story.

At one point during that time, I wrote an account to the Rebbe and asked if I should carry on meeting with her. The Rebbe responded in the affirmative—'lehamshich'.

For the time being, however, there was no rush. So, Monday evening I took the bus upstate, returning to camp.

An Excerpt from Mr. Zalmon Jaffe's Diary

That night, I received a message that the Rebbe desired to see Roselyn and me straight away. Roselyn ... had a bad headache ... so I went alone.

I admit I do not remember much about this Yeichidus. Events were moving too fast for me ... The Rebbe suggested that it should take place in the month of Tishrei or in Tammuz. I surmised that the Rebbe was discussing the Tenoyim (engagement) but the Rebbe was talking about the WEDDING - and neither Roselyn nor I had yet made Shmuel's acquaintance!



RABBI SHMUEL LEW AND A GROUP OF CHILDREN WITH THE REBBE AT A CAMP GAN YISROEL REUNION, 17 SHEVAT 5723

At that *yechidus*, my father-in-law expressed his hesitations about how fast things were moving. He told the Rebbe: “We don’t know him well. Truth be told, we’ve never actually met him. What will he do for a living? How will he have *parnasah*?” Referencing the previous night’s *farbrengen*, the Rebbe replied: “*Er vet zain a lamterntchik!*” (he will be a lamplighter).

The next day, I got the call to make a U-turn. I was to go to Crown Heights and meet Hindy’s parents, as they would be returning to England Wednesday afternoon.

After utilizing the opportunity to daven Maariv with the Rebbe following his return from the Ohel, I went to meet the family. Mrs. Jaffe was pleased to meet me, and remarked that if we’d like to, we could correspond. When we’d meet next year, her daughter would be mature enough to discuss marriage more seriously...

We figured that, as the Jaffes were returning to England, I’d pay them a visit in the winter and we’d close the shidduch then.

But the Rebbe had other plans. The next morning, the day of the charter’s departure, Rabbi Hodakov, chief of the Rebbe’s Secretariat, approached me. He had a message to relay to me: “You should wind it up today, one way or the other.” I responded that it’s *‘toluy bedaas acheirim’* (a decision dependent on someone else), and not exclusively up to me.

Rabbi Hodakov replied that a shidduch has three stages:

1. A couple meets. If they agree to build a home together, then,
2. Their parents meet. If they’re happy to move ahead, then,
3. You write in and ask the Rebbe for a bracha.

After davening I went to meet my soon-to-be *kallah*, and we agreed that we’d build a home for the Rebbe and move on shlichus. Having satisfactorily concluded the first stage, we promptly arranged for our parents to meet at the Milky Restaurant and discuss matters over lunch. “I was the leader of the flight,” writes Mr. Jaffe about that meeting. “Passengers were continuously interrupting our meal and conversation, as they had so many problems to settle.”

Mazal Tov!

Ready to ask for the Rebbe’s go-ahead, I gave Rabbi Hodakov my note to pass on to the Rebbe. The Rebbe responded with his approval and blessing, and then wrote: יהא בשעתומו"צ בל בן עדי עד בית חסידותי ומאושר בכל (May [the wedding] be in an auspicious time. An everlasting edifice, a Chasidische home, fortunate in all matters).

Meanwhile, the visitors from England were each given a few private moments with the Rebbe—a *tzeischem lshalom* (farewell). At her turn, my *kallah* asked the Rebbe for his blessing.

An Excerpt from Mr. Zalmon Jaffe’s Diary

The scene at ‘770’ was chaotic, utter confusion and appalling.

Hundreds of travelers, their friends and relatives together with hundreds of Yeshiva boys (who were always interested in everything connected with the Rebbe) were all milling around the vicinity of the hallway. I was in the waiting room doing my best to keep the queue moving. Passengers would enter into the Rebbe’s study and they would just not leave. We had almost - literally - to drag some of them from out of the Rebbe’s presence. It was very fortunate indeed that it was our own chartered flight - and it could not leave without us. (We left New York three hours late because of this lack of co-operation from our members.)

Suddenly a large commotion was heard outside. Rabbi [Bentche] Shem Tov had arrived. He was holding a bottle of vodka and a glass and wishing everyone mazel tov, mazel tov. He pushed a glass of vodka into my hand and said. “Say L’chaim, [Hindy] has made up her mind and she is now a Kallah!” What excitement! What a turmoil!

But [we] hardly knew the Chosson... The only consolation, the anchor that kept us sane, was that the Rebbe had agreed to the Shidduch and given his blessing. That alone assured our rationality.

My father was away at a legal meeting and couldn’t be there during the day. He came to 770 that night, and as the Rebbe entered for Maariv, he turned to my father with a big smile, a sort of Mazal Tov.

Upon their arrival in England, the Jaffes received a letter from the Rebbe, dated 28 Tamuz 5722:

“... It is gratifying to know that you had ... many good wishes of Mazel Tov for your daughter’s shidduch. It must have helped Mrs. Jaffe to get used to the idea that her daughter has grown up and there is much to be grateful for in the thought that the Almighty has helped bring up such a suitable shidduch without undue strain and worry.”

Rabbi Bentzion Shemtov told me an episode that reveals the Rebbe’s personal attention to our shidduch: “Subsequent to your engagement,” he related, “I was walking down the street, and Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe’s mother, approached me. She smilingly told me: ‘*M’hot mir gezogt az ir zait gevoren a gantze shadchan!* (I was told [presumably by the Rebbe] that you’ve become a full-on shadchan).”

To sum up how distinctive this shidduch was, we present here a heartfelt letter, typos and all, which Rabbi Bentzion Shemtov airmailed the Jaffes (the only one he ever wrote in English!):

Yud Tes Tammuz

Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov!

My dear, dear, dear Zalmon. Rosali and Hinda Malka!

To see chassidische happiness in your home and BH I feel in my soul like a happiness in my own family. I hope that everyone of the family of Zalmon Jaffe will understand my feelings.

"I was very happy to see the nearness from the Rebbe Shlita to everyone of your family. For the 47 years in Lubavitch, I have never hear or see from the Rebbes to push a Shiduch like the Rebbe in the Shiduch of Hinda Malka (Le'arichas Yomim Veshonim Tovos.....)

I am sorry for my broken English but I cannot ask somebody to write my feelings and I want Roselyn and Hinda Malka themselves to read my beste wishes for long life in happiness (Begashmius Veruchnius)

I hope to hear from everyone and to see Besimcho

B. Szemtow

Wedding Location

The first order of business was to decide on a time and place for the wedding. The Rebbe was involved every step of the way. For example, in a letter to my parents dated 7 Elul 5722, the Rebbe wrote:

"...I wish you Mazal Tov for the good shidduch of your son Shmuel... With regard to the question of the time and place of the wedding, this is a matter which both sides should discuss and decide by mutual consent. I have written to this effect to your *Mechutan*, adding that in general it is customary to arrange the wedding in the place where the *Kallah* lives."

One aspect we took strongly into consideration was the hope that the Rebbe would be *mesader kiddushin*. While in the first decade of the *nesius* it was common, the practice virtually came to an end on 10 Shevat 5720, with just a handful of exceptions². Nonetheless, we would do anything for the merit of having the Rebbe participate in our *chuppah*.

In response to Mr. Jaffe's expressing this hope, the Rebbe wrote:

"With regard to my position relating to *Siddur Chuppah* and *Kiddushin*, you can gather it from the fact that in about two weeks a cousin of mine will be married in New York to a Talmid of the Lubavitcher Yeshiva, but the *Mesader Kiddushin* will be one of the *Anash Rabbonim*." (27 Elul 5722)

As Mr. Jaffe noted:

"This [letter] was a big blow to our ambitions ... [Rabbi Shemtov] concurred with my viewpoint, that although the Rebbe had HINTED that he would not be *Messader Kidushin*, nevertheless he had not expressed an unequivocal "No." If the marriage took place in Manchester then there was no chance at all of achieving our objective, whereas if the location was Crown Heights, then there was every possibility that the Rebbe might

הגביר וזוהר וזוהר

מאז דאר, דאר, דאר, זאלמאן, רוסאלי און
הינדא מאלקע!

וויב און

טו זען חאסידישע האַפּינעס אין יור הויז און
ס'פּיל 'ין מיין זאָלע ליכע אַ האַפּינעס אין
מיין פאַמיליע זעלב' איך האָב עס אַלעס פון אַ
דער פאַמיליע פון זאַלמאן יאַפּע שטענדיג מאַך
און פּיל מאַך.

איך בין זייער האַפּי טו זען דער נעאַרסט
פון דער רעבּע רובּ'ס צו אַלעס פון אַ
יור פאַמיליע

פאַר די 47 יאָר אין לובאַוויטש
איך האָב נישט געזען פון דער רעבּע רובּ'
צו פּוש אַ שידוך ליכע דער רעבּע רובּ'
אין דער שידוך פון הינדא מאלקע און נאָך

און ביאָן דאָס געזען און נאָך

איך בין זייער פאַר מיין ברוקע ענגליש
און איך קאָן אַסאך סאַמבאָדי צו שרייבן מיין
פּילינג און איך וויל פּאַסאָבן און זאַלמאן מאלקע
זעלב' צו דערן מאַך די בעסטע ווישן פאַר לאַנג
ליב אין האַפּינעס און נאָך

איך האָב צו האָרן פון אַלעס פון אַ.
און צו זען און אַ ב. שזעטאָו

REB BENTZION SHEMTOV'S LETTER IN ENGLISH TO REB ZALMAN JAFFE, WISHING HIM MAZAL TOV ON THE OCCASION OF THE SHIDDUCH

RABBI PINNY LEW



RABBI SHMUEL LEW ADDRESSES A CROWD IN THE EARLY 5720S

RABBI PINNY LEW

relent and bestow upon us this great honour.”

Owing to Mr. Jaffe’s influential position in Manchester, the Rebbe originally wrote to him that the wedding should be held there. Eventually, however, he consented for it to be in New York, provided they made a *Sheva Brachos* back in Manchester.³

Ultimately, the wedding was scheduled to take place in Brooklyn’s Glenwood Jewish Center on Sunday, 15 Tammuz, 5723.

Planning the Trip to England

With the Rebbe’s encouragement, our shidduch had taken the express track, which was quite unlike the way things were done in England. We hadn’t even had the opportunity to get to know each other’s families, something my in-laws were keen on changing.

Now, I wasn’t overly excited about the idea of visiting my *kallah* and her family. I reasoned that on the Rebbe’s encouragement, *chassanim* would make sure not to spend time in the same city as the *kallah*. Many of my friends in yeshiva in 770 would therefore spend the time of their engagement learning in Montreal or Newark. With that outlook, I didn’t feel comfortable about the idea of traveling overseas to meet my *kallah*. The idea had been brought up, however, so I asked the Rebbe if I should go along with it. The Rebbe responded:

כל ענין נסייעות הנ"ל מקום לחשוב אודותם לאחר י' שתהי' השערה
עכ"פ לזמן החתונה

[The whole idea mentioned about traveling can only be considered once there is a general idea about the *chasuna*’s timing.]

The Rebbe didn’t negate the idea. However, being that there was an ongoing discussion at the time whether the wedding would be in the winter or later, in the summer, the travel plans would have to wait.

Yechidus

As part of their rather relentless campaign that I travel to England to meet their family, my in-laws arranged for the *kallah* to come to New York. As she put it in a letter to me, her father was sending her to meet my family, as he wanted me to meet hers.

It was during her visit that I merited my first two *yechidus*’n of the year.

Sunday night, 28 Cheshvan, my *kallah* had a *yechidus*. Knowing that the discussion might relate to me as well, I waited right outside ‘*Gan Eden HaElyon*’, ready to enter on a moment’s notice. During her *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked where

she would like to live after our *chasuna*. “That’s dependent on my *chossan* as well,” she replied. The Rebbe followed up: “First tell me where you yourself want to live.” But she asked if I could join. The Rebbe insisted: “Let’s first talk ourselves.” However, she didn’t say much, so the Rebbe agreed to call me in.

When I came in, the Rebbe asked me in Yiddish if I had any thoughts. Earlier, Rabbi Hodakov had asked if I’d consider being a *Rov* in Greece, similar to Rabbi Gershon Mendel Garelik in Italy. Unsure if he was just sounding me out, or relaying the Rebbe’s recommendation, I replied to him: “If that’s what the Rebbe said, we’re in.”

Back to the *yechidus*: I relayed that Rabbi Hodakov had brought up Greece. It seems that the Rebbe didn’t have that in mind for us, however. He asked whether we knew which city in Greece was on the table, Athens or Thessaloniki. I said I don’t know, and added that it was probably just a theoretical question. Turning to my wife, he said in English: “Don’t worry about Greece,” and concluded that, as I suggested, it was probably just theoretical.

At that *yechidus* the Rebbe gave us very nice *brochos*. He also told us to keep sending in suggestions for *shlichus* as they came up. I continued conveying them for months, always stressing that we would go wherever the Rebbe would like.

About a month later, the Rebbe wrote to Mr. Zalmon Jaffe

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הגאון מליובאוויטש
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770 אסטערן פארק
ברוקלין 12 נ. י.
א. א. שניידער

B.H.
6th of Tishrei, 5723
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Miss Hinda Malka Jaffe
105 Cavendish Road
Kersal, Lancs.

Blessing and Greetings:

I was pleased to receive your letter of 28th of Elul, in which you report on your activities to strengthen Yiddishkeit among the younger generation of Manchester, about your teaching, etc. As every Jew is assured Divine help in such work, every effort is bound to be fruitful, and may it be G-d's will that you continue your good work with growing success, in gladness of heart. This in turn will increase G-d's blessings to you and those who are near and dear to you.

Please convey my good wishes also to the other leaders who are working with you. I trust you have all taken advantage of the present auspicious period of the year to intensify your good work and influence.

I appreciate your letting me know about the success of the camp. I trust this has further convinced you that where there is a firm resolution to accomplish things, they are indeed accomplished.

Wishing you a chesmo umgar chasim toivo for the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good,

With blessing, *m. Schneiderson*

P.S. Regarding your desired visit to New York, as I indicated to your brother, it is suggested that the time of the wedding should at least tentatively be considered, and then it will be more practical and easier to consider a visit, etc.

Enclosed is a copy of my Rosh Hashanah message, which I trust you will put to good advantage.

IN THE REBBE’S LETTER TO MRS. LEW FROM 6 TISHREI 5723, HE MENTIONS HER “CHOSSON”

RABBI PINNY LEW

on the topic:

“As for the young couple's plans after the wedding, there was some discussion on this subject without a final decision, as also in regard to their settling in general, for they had no definite suggestions to offer, nor did I hear from them any suggestions that you or the Chosson's parents might have made.” (3rd Light of Chanukah, 5723)

During the *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked for my thoughts on going to England to meet the family. I responded that I'm unsure if the Rebbe would be happy for a *bochur* to travel during the *zman* in Yeshiva.

The Rebbe instructed that I go for a visit, but it should involve spreading Yiddishkeit; for example, speaking at an event. While in England, I was also to visit London and far-brother for Tzach there. Then he turned to me in and said in Hebrew: מפני מה יאמרו הבריות ([the reason I should have a pretext for the visit is] due to ‘what will people say?.’)

This too was relayed by the Rebbe in a letter to Mr. Zalmon Jaffe:

“With regard to your future son-in-law's visit, I suggested that there should be some external ostensible occasion for his

trip to minimize possible criticism.” (Letter 8 Kislev, 5723)

And followed up with the following:

“As for Shmuel Lew's visit to [Manchester], I trust it will eventually materialize for the benefit of all concerned, and no doubt you are exchanging correspondence on the subject.” (27 Shevat, 5723)

And another letter during my trip: “By now you will have received regards through Rabbi Shmuel Lew, and may G-d grant that he makes the most of his visit and utilizes it also in the interests of the community, and no doubt he will find an opportunity to visit our institutions in London for a few days.” (3 Nissan, 5723)

Yechidus 2 Kislev

On Tuesday, we were told that the Rebbe had invited us for *yechidus* on Thursday afternoon, before my *kallah's* return flight that night. This was a true gift, as this was not a time that the Rebbe regularly held *yechidus*. This time I was told from the outset to join.

At that special *yechidus*, the Rebbe told my *kallah* to learn typing—which wasn't common at the time—and the like, *'like*



THE REBBE WISHING MAZEL TOV TO RABBI SHMUEL LEW AND HIS KALLAH UNDER THE CHUPAH

the sister of Shmuel'. My sister, Mrs. Mindy Feller OBM, and her husband Rabbi Moshe Feller *sheyichye*, had recently been sent on shlichus to Minnesota, and she worked together with him on the shlichus, taking on the role of secretary. Being that we were to be shluchim as well, the Rebbe wanted my *kallah* to have the necessary skills to be an integral part of our shlichus.

As Chanukah was later that month, the Rebbe gave my *kallah* \$10 to distribute among those who took part in Bnos Chabad of Manchester as Chanukah Gelt, and gave her a silver dollar as '*schar tirchah*' (for the effort). The Rebbe also gave my *kallah* a mimeograph of 'the Sicha of the week' (as he called it) to pass on to her father.

At that *yechidus* we received from the Rebbe some beautiful *brachos*. He also instructed me to study for—and receive—*semicha*.

Birthday Yechidus

The next *yechidus* I had was in connection with my birthday, which is 20 Adar. At that *yechidus* I asked the Rebbe how to spiritually prepare for my upcoming wedding. The Rebbe

responded, "The most important preparation is to learn the הלכות הצריכות [relevant halachos], however, it's currently too early for that. For clear guidance about when to learn these laws, you should ask the *Mashpi'im* who were in Lubavitch, Otwock, and [Krementchug]." [In the *yechidus* just before our *chasuna*, I received additional instructions from the Rebbe.]

Curious about who had spent time in the three mentioned Yeshivos, I asked those in the know, and the consensus pointed to Reb Shmuel Levitin. He recommended that I begin learning the halachos six to eight weeks before my *chasuna*. He suggested studying from the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch and incorporating the rulings of the Misgeres Hashulchan on Kitzur Shulchan Aruch.

Travel

My visit to England was now scheduled, and an 'ostensible reason' had been planned. While the Chabad community in Manchester was rather small, they would regularly arrange concerts to benefit Chabad activities in London and Eretz Yisroel.⁴ To this end, they retained the 800-seat Holsworth Hall for a *chazzonus* concert scheduled for 2 Nissan 5723. I



THE REBBE DEPARTS 770 AFTER BEING MESADER KIDDUSHIN. WHEN RABBI SHMUEL LEW SHOWED THIS PICTURE TO REBBTZIN CHANA, SHE COMMENTED THAT THIS IS A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF HER SON

DREAM FULFILLED

While on the surface the Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin* at our *chasuna* in my father-in-law's merit, it could very well be that my mother, and her deep feelings for the Rebbe, played a role. Born in 1905 on the Lower East Side, she had no Jewish schools to go to. Nonetheless, she was deeply *frum*, covered her hair with a *shaitel*, and had an unheard-of-at-the-time 8 children.

When the buses left for camp, the Rebbe came out of 770 to see us off. In the first post-card my mother dispatched after sending us off to Gan Yisroel, she described how she was profoundly fascinated by the Rebbe's holy eyes.

After I transferred to Lubavitch we got to know the Shemtovs, and my mother was invited to Berel's wedding. As I was then in Montreal, she wrote to me a description of the wedding. "My dream in life," she finished, "is that you have a *chuppah* like that."

After our *chasuna*, she remarked that her life's dream had been fulfilled.

was to address the crowd. The Rebbe also gave me his written *brocha* for the trip: “בהצלחה - רצו"ש - תהא - May [your trip] back and forth be with success.”

Speaking engagement and all, ultimately I was traveling to visit my *kallah* and meet her family. While the Rebbe had given the go-ahead, it was an exception to the norm at the time, and I figured it would best be kept quiet. Therefore, I was somewhat surprised that at the Shabbos farbrengen, the Rebbe called me up: “Distribute some here, and some in England,” he said, presenting me with a bottle of mashke.

In addition to the talk in Manchester, I also addressed a large farbrengen in London during that trip, as well as a N'shei Chabad women's gathering, conveying fresh regards from 770. I also had the opportunity to meet *Rabbonim* in Manchester and Dayan Yitzchak Weiss in London.

Rebbetzin Chana

Rabbi Bentzion Shemtov of London asked me to deliver a parcel to the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana upon my return to New York. Thanks to this mission, I made the acquaintance of this majestic woman and merited to experience some memorable moments in her regal presence.

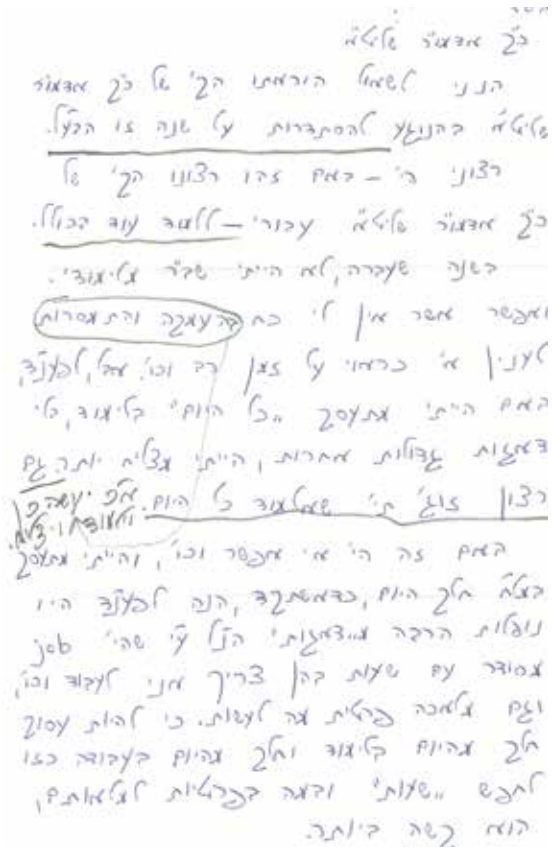
Upon my return from the UK on Friday morning, Yud-Aleph Nissan, I went straight to Reb Dovid Raskin, the contact person for Rebbetzin Chana, and asked him if he could pass on the package. He informed me that on that very day a group of Chassidim would visit her for a small farbrengen in honor of the Rebbe's birthday. I could come along, he said, and present it to her then.

The small crowd, consisting of a handful of respected Chassidim and Reb Dovid, shared some stories, said l'chaim, and wished success and blessing to the Rebbe. The Rebbetzin was very keen on hearing about Rabbi Shemtov, my in-laws the Jaffes, and the situation in England. Following this initial encounter, I merited to visit her a number of times, including other 'farbrengens'.⁵

Chasuna Week

The third annual charter flight from England was scheduled to land on Sunday, Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, and depart on Monday, 16 Tammuz. In past years, one aircraft had sufficed. This time, however, “so many friends wished to travel to New York for the wedding that we had to charter two planes.”

In *yechidus* upon his arrival, Mr. Jaffe said: “Due to my position in the community, I cannot afford to move the wedding here. The only justification will be if the Rebbe is *Mesader Kiddushin*.” While still not formally consenting, the Rebbe smiled. My father-in-law took that as a yes.



RABBI PINNY LEW

RABBI LEW'S LETTER TO THE REBBE WITH HIS PLANS TO REMAIN IN KOLEL FOR A SECOND YEAR WITHOUT BEING INVOLVED IN OTHER PART TIME WORK. THE REBBE CIRCLED THE WORDS בהעמקה והתמסרות, INDICATING THAT HE FOCUS SOLELY ON HIS LEARNING. AFTER UNDERLINING THE WORDS THAT REB SHMUEL WROTE, THAT HIS WIFE WANTS HIM TO LEARN ALL DAY, THE REBBE WROTE אם כן יעשה, AND SO, HE SHOULD SO DO SO AND BE SUCCESSFUL.

The Rebbe Consents

Ten days before our wedding, at 11 PM on 5 Tammuz, my *kallah* and I went into *yechidus* to receive a *brocha* for our wedding.

The Rebbe had questions about the wedding schedule. “Why is the chuppah called for 7:30?” he asked. “Is it because the hall is unavailable earlier?”

He also asked me when I planned on going to the Ohel. I said I planned to go on Thursday, 12 Tammuz, (when everyone would go in honor of the Frierdiker Rebbe's Chag Hageulah) and also on the day of our *chuppah*. The Rebbe said that was correct.

He instructed me to learn Chapters 16 and 17 of Reishis Chochma Shaar Hakedusha daily until the wedding, completing the study on Motzei Shabbos-Sunday.

Then we received a beautiful *brocha*:

זאל זיין א ווארעמע ליכטיגע שטוב ביי זיך, און א ווארעמע ליכטיגע שטוב פאר יענעם

May [the home you build together] be a warm, bright home inside, and a warm, bright home for others.

Seven hours later, at 6:00 AM, my father-in-law had his *yechidus*. Addressing the late hour for which the *chuppah* was scheduled, the Rebbe told him: "It's a pity for the *chosson* and *kallah* to fast [until then]." He responded: "If the Rebbe will be *Mesader Kiddushin*, they'll fast for two weeks!" "[Keeping them fasting so late] is unnecessary," the Rebbe replied.

"It was with some agitation, excitement, and no little trepidation," Mr. Jaffe writes, "that I asked the Rebbe at what time would be the *chuppah*. He answered, to my great relief, that it should take place outside '770' at 5:00 pm precisely." This was clear indication that the Rebbe indeed would join.

However, the Rebbe gave us a few conditions. Firstly, we should tell absolutely no one that the Rebbe would be at the *chuppah*. Secondly, we mustn't approach the printer regarding printing updated invitations before Thursday (giving only a couple of days to typeset-print-pack-ship!). Thirdly, the updated invitation should not mention the Rebbe's participation.

While the Rebbe didn't explain his reasoning, I do have a

theory for the significance of keeping absolute secrecy until Thursday:

My dear friend Reb Leibel Wolowik of Montreal, may he be well, was getting married on Wednesday night to my *kallah's* friend. He had lost his father as a young child, and his mother passed away while he was engaged. Of course, he also wanted the Rebbe to be *mesader kiddushin* at his wedding. I feel that out of sensitivity to him, the Rebbe waited and told us to only approach the printer the morning after his wedding.

The Rebbe sent us a note saying that the *chuppah* should take place at 5:00 PM *bediyuk* [precisely], doubly emphasizing that word.

After the Rebbe gave us the great *besurah* that he would be *mesader kiddushin*, Rabbi Hodakov asked me who would be taking care of the *kesubah* and the other halachic intricacies. I replied that they would be arranged by Rabbi Dvorkin.

He also inquired if my *kallah* had a *sheitel*. Contrary to the erstwhile norm of owning just one, I informed him that she had two. "It's proper that she should have a spare," he agreed. "That way, when her *sheitel* gets cleaned, she won't be stuck without one." He also asked when she'd begin wearing it, and I said before the *chuppah*. "That's fine," was his response.⁶

Inviting the Rebbetzin

An Excerpt from Mr. Zalmon Jaffe's Diary

I asked the Rebbe for permission to invite his Rebbetzin - Chaya Mushka - to the wedding. The Rebbe said: "You can invite her. She will be delighted; although, she will not come physically. She does know of you, since you always 'say it with flowers.'" (The Rebbetzin did not like appearing in public. However, we had for some time now been sending her and the Rebbe flowers before Yom Tov).

Just over a week before the wedding, the *choson* and *kallah* and ourselves were granted the honor and privilege of meeting the Rebbetzin in her home for the first time. One incident comes to mind, illustrating the wonderful and perfect hostess she was.

Shmuel accidentally knocked over a glass of red fruit punch. Shmuel's face turned the color of the now bright red table cloth. The Rebbetzin immediately assured him that it was a wonderful *simon brocha* (sign of blessing) and so on. She seemed so happy about it that I was tempted to knock over my glass, too!

A POSTPONED YECHIDUS

On the day after our wedding, we would be joining the charter flight to England for our Sheva Brachos, and spending some five weeks there. Therefore we were both entitled, like all the guests leaving after 12 Tammuz, to *yechidus* on Friday afternoon⁷. As it was within a week before the *chasuna*, we would go in separately.

Late Friday afternoon the Rebbe sent out a message that instead of going in now, I would have *yechidus* together with my wife on the day after our wedding.

In that special *yechidus*, the Rebbe spoke to us, amongst other things, about our upcoming trip. "Your trip to England is a *Merkos Shlichus*," he said. "Like all *Merkos Shluchim*, go to Rabbi Hodakov and he will give you each a dollar." The Rebbe also gave me a Tanya and my wife a Siddur.

The Chasuna

For the Mincha before my *chasuna*, I was *zoche*, like all *chassanim*, to use the Rebbe's siddur.

The Rebbe had said that the *chuppah* would begin at precisely five o'clock. It was getting close, yet the Rebbe hadn't returned from the Ohel. At about 4:56, the Rebbe's car pulled up. Without exception, the Rebbe would immediately daven Mincha upon returning from the Ohel. However, on his way into 770, the Rebbe told a surprised Rabbi Hodakov that the *chuppah* would take place imminently.

As the clock struck five, the Rebbe came through the doorway of 770 and down the few steps to where the *Chuppah* had been set up. Of course, the Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin*. After Rabbi Hodakov read the *Kesubah*, the Rebbe was honored with reading all the *brachos* under the *chuppah*.

We left the *chuppah* walking backward, as the Rebbe was still standing there.

Thankfully, we had it recorded on tape. My brother-in-law Rabbi Avrohom Jaffe had the foresight to run a wire from the *Chuppah* into 770 and attach it to his Wollensak tape recorder. We also retained a videographer once we knew the Rebbe would be there.

It was amazing to see how the Rebbe started punctually. Barely five minutes after the *chuppah*, the sky gave way to a torrential downpour.

'Merkos Shlichus'

The Sheva Brachos in Manchester was a beautiful event set like a wedding and with a *mechitza* of flowers. A representative of every Jewish organization in town spoke. The eighteenth and final speaker was Rabbi Bentzion Shemtov. His whole speech was one word: "*Uuuuuforatzta*" he sang, and kicked off joyous dancing.

We then got to doing our 'Merkos Shlichus' (see sidebar). I had always been a camp boy (in fact, my connection to Lubavitch came about through Camp Gan Yisroel) and spent my summers there. This was to be my first Merkos Shlichus (as the *Meshalayach*, the *Nossi Hador*, called it).

Over the summer, we ran a day camp in Manchester, visited the Gan Yisroel girls' camp in England, and addressed other camps as well. Each Shabbos I would speak at another shul, and I also led *farbrengens* in people's homes. Like all Merkos Shlichim, we took *seforim* to sell, and we visited surrounding cities, such as Liverpool, speaking to the *Rabbonim* there.

Regards to CGI Detroit

Upon our return at the end of Av, the Rebbe tasked us with another mission. We were to give regards to Camp Gan Yisroel in Detroit from the camp in England that we had visited; the Rebbe would sponsor the trip. Rabbi Hodakov told us exactly what our message to the campers should be: "You're campers in Gan Yisroel; you have Gan Yisroel here. What you may not know, however, is that there are Gan Yisroel's all over the world."

We came on the last day of camp, and I spent a few hours composing a song on this theme. At the banquet, I told the children "You must realize that you are part of the Gan Yisroel family which spans continents. There are Gan Yisroels in the farthest reaches of the globe (at the time there were just a handful, but nowadays that is literally true) and you are all connected."

Then I sang the song, with the chorus reading: "International, Gan Yisroel, Gan Yisroel, all over *di velt*."

This was the only time I received a clear directive from the Rebbe telling me precisely what to say. And it's as relevant as ever. The Rebbe was instilling within us a global mentality: all Chassidim are one family no matter where we are.

In Kollel

After many deliberations, the final decision was that after our marriage we'd live in Crown Heights. Respecting this, the Rebbe had told my father-in-law: "For the first few months to a year that a young couple is married, they should live near

MECHITZA

In those days, having a *Mechitza* at a wedding wasn't to be taken for granted. When there were struggles to ensure one would be put up for my brother-in-law Avrohom's wedding a year later, the Rebbe referenced our Sheva Brachos in a letter:

I am certain that the chuppah and the wedding dinner will [be] arranged and take place with a Mechitza and with due dignity and splendor.

And in a footnote added: *Certainly at least as at the* שבע ברכות *of your daughter* תרחי.

(20th of Tammuz, 5724)



RABBI SHMUEL LEW, 5723

WHY SO FAR?

In a letter to Mr. Zalmon Jaffe, the Rebbe explained how the *kollel* in 770 is unique:

With regard to your question why should your son-in-law learn in a specified place, while he could learn in another place at much smaller cost, I hope you will not take it amiss if I answer your question with a question of my own, in [an] area where you are an expert. The same answer will apply in both. My question is: At first glance it seems strange that you should go to such trouble and expense and inconvenience and privation – to go to... Japan in order to place an order for footwear there. Would it not have saved you much expense, trouble, etc., to place your order for footwear with a local manufacturer? But undoubtedly, the thought had also occurred to you, but you decided wisely that the kind of merchandise you desire and at the right price could not be obtained in M/c and that the trip, expense, etc. were justified.

(1st Day of Chanukah, 5725)

other newlyweds. It's important that they be able to talk to each other.”

I learned in '*kollel*' which at that point was a fresh concept in Lubavitch, and wasn't a fully organized *moisad**. When I asked the Rebbe when to start, he was surprised by the question. “לפלא השאלה הרי ת"ת כל יום עולם מלא הוא.” The very question is startling. Every day of Torah learning is a whole world!” It was just a group of *yungeleit* learning together, mostly supported by their parents. For my *parnassah* that first year, I worked part-time for Merkos, and my in-laws pitched in to help support us.

By the next year, 5725, the *Kollel* had taken form. My wife and I desired that for that year I learn full-time, and with the Rebbe's consent and blessing, I continued on. My father-in-law, whom we were relying on for financial support, had fallen on hard times. In response to his describing his difficulty taking on our financial burden, the Rebbe wrote:

What follows next was not discussed nor even mentioned with your daughter and son-in-law, but I raise the matter here in connection with your mentioning the weight of the financial burden which you have had in the past in supporting them. I suggest that you should write to me (without involving them in the matter) what sum you would consider easy enough for you to send for their support in the future, and I would then בע"ה find a way to make up the difference. I emphasize the fact that I should not want them to be involved in this, so that your son-in-law could apply himself to his studies with complete peace of mind, and your daughter should also have no anxiety. (15th of Marcheshvan, 5725)

So strong was the Rebbe's desire for me to learn in *kollel*, that he personally took on the financial responsibility! From what I understand, my father-in-law pulled through in the end, and didn't need the Rebbe's assistance.

He Has Two Children By Me

I'll share two episodes from those years which highlight the Rebbe's personal concern for our family:

When Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hecht went to England on a speaking tour, the Rebbe asked him to send regards to my father-in-law. “He has two children by me,” said the Rebbe, referring to my brother-in-law in yeshiva, and my wife.

In response to a routine letter I wrote the Rebbe in 5724, he replied with concern for my wife's social life in an unfamiliar country:

מה בהנוגע לזוגתו תי' ההתיידדה כאן כבר עם נשי חבד? אחדות על כל פנים?

(How is your wife faring? Has she made friends yet with some of the *N'shei Chabad* here? A few at minimum.)

Where to Live

Over those few years, I wrote in many long-term *shlichus* options that came up. Each time I stressed that we have no preference; we're ready to go wherever the Rebbe will send us.

However, it seems that the Rebbe wanted us to personally feel for a place. In response to one such letter while we were engaged, in which I 'reported' the different options offered to us, the Rebbe wrote:

"שאלתים להצעות מפורטות מצדם – וכותב מה שאומר פלוגי
"ופלוגי בזה!"

[I asked them for detailed suggestions from their perspective. [Instead,] he writes me what other individuals say about it.]

This went back and forth during my time in *kollel*. In one letter during the summer of 5725, I mentioned that if the Rebbe feels we would be more comfortable moving to England, my wife's native country and where her parents live, we're fine with that as well.

Shlichus

In response to my letter, which included some 15 possibilities for *shlichus*, the Rebbe wrote out an outline for a *shlichus*, filling a double-sided paper: "Priority should be given to creating the position of 'Youth Minister' in Manchester, under the auspices of the local Beis Din or Jewish community ... If this isn't feasible, (although in my opinion it's within reach, and shouldn't require much effort) look into London."

As the position in Manchester wasn't materializing, I asked the Rebbe what the next step should be. The Rebbe responded:

אם כן יכתב עם לונדון על דבר משרה אצלם, על כל פנים לשנה

[If so, you should correspond with (Lubavitch of) London regarding a position by them, for at least one year.]

Sunday, 27 Av 5725, we had a *yechidus* in connection with our one-way ticket to England the next day. When I was in *yechidus* together with my wife, the Rebbe would speak to us in English, going so far as to summarize the contents of my letter for my wife to understand.

This time, however, the Rebbe asked her if she spoke Yiddish. She replied that she does understand quite a bit but doesn't speak it well. Said the Rebbe: "It's a shame that after two years in Brooklyn [you don't speak Yiddish]". Then he told her: "I'm going to speak to your husband in Yiddish. If there's anything you don't understand, you can interrupt me."

He directed me to tell Rabbi Nachman Sudak to hire me for a year. But primarily, I was to deal with youth. "The coming months of Elul and Tishrei are opportune times '*tzu tohn mit yugent*' [to make an impact on youth]."

FROM THE REBBE

Rabbi Yossi Lew, who was a one-year-old child at the time, relates: The Rebbe had a silver dollar for me, and knocked it on the table to get my attention. I turned around and immediately grabbed the coin! Said the Rebbe: "I see he likes money already!" To which my father added: "When it's from the Rebbe." And the Rebbe said: "Ah! From the Rebbe, yes."

Leaving to London

That night, at our *tzeischem leshalom* reception, Rabbi Hodakov said: "This is not a regular *shliach*. Rather, he is traveling 'אל הארץ אשר אראך', without knowing his destination".

The next day, the day we went out on *shlichus*, Rabbi Hodakov showed me a letter that the Rebbe had just received from London. "This letter," which told of their pressing need for a High School boys teacher, "can be viewed as no less valid than an invitation to you." Indeed, I taught the class for a year, and that was the beginning of our sixty-year-strong *shlichus* in London. **T**

1. See Derher #110.
2. For the full story see 'Mekadesh Yisroel' (Derher Kislev 5773).
3. For the full story of the *shidduch* and *chasuna* from Mr. Jaffe's perspective, see Chabad.org/259892, from 'My Encounter With The Rebbe' (PCL Publishing) vol. 1.
4. See chabad.org/1568019 about the concert of Mr. Jan Pearce.
5. Some of Rabbi Lew's memories from these gatherings were shared in Derher Vov Tishrei 5775 Supplement pg 15.
6. Being that this episode has been distorted and misrepresented, Rabbi Lew wants to clarify that the response was as presented here.
7. While *yechidus* was regularly held on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings (and from 5725 on, just Sunday and Thursday) there was one little-known exception. When a large *yoma depagra* *farbrengen* was on a Thursday night, the guests from abroad would have their *yechidus* on *Motzei Shabbos* in the winter, and, if it was summer, on Friday afternoon.
8. See 'Kollel', Derher Cheshvan 5780.

FOR THE AUDIO AND VIDEO CLIPS OF
RABBI LEW'S CHUPPAH, SCAN THE
FOLLOWING BARCODE:

