

# The Weekly Farbrenge

  
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 EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

## YUD-TES KISLEV (I)

### A SPECIAL DAY

After the *geula* of the Alter Rebbe, the chassidim wanted to write a *Megillas Yud-Tes Kislev* to be read each year, so they prepared a draft to present to him. The matter was kept a secret until they traveled to Liozna, where they asked for his consent for their project. The Alter Rebbe did not grant it, but told them, "This day will be established as a *Yom-Tov* amongst Yidden, in which *HaShem's* Name will be glorified and thousands of Yidden will be aroused to *teshuvah* and *avoda*. This episode is engraved in the 'heart of Yisroel' above and is written in the heart of every Yid below."

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 38)

### THE SEUDAS HODA'A

How did the chassidim in Liadi celebrate the *seudas hoda'a* for the *geula* of *Yud-Tes Kislev* which took place in תקס"ב (1801)?

Reb Aizik Homiler described it for us: "That year, during Tishrei, the Rebbe was extremely joyful. He mentioned to the chassidim who were close to him that he had not yet made a *seudas hoda'a* for his *geula*, as one is obligated to do, *al pi halachah*. From this, they understood that the coming *Yud-Tes Kislev* would be something out of the ordinary.

"At the beginning of Kislev, we, the young chassidim of Homil, Bobruisk and the surrounding villages, put together whatever money we had, hired a wagon, and bought a dozen pairs of *volikess*, felt-lined winter boots. We set off together by foot, except that from time to time we took turns resting on the wagon. As we passed through various towns, we were joined by many more chassidim – eight *minyanim* in all – and on Thursday of *Parshas Vayishlach* we arrived in Liadi.

"That *Shabbos* was the most joyous that chassidim ever experienced. During *Shabbos* the Rebbe delivered three *maamarim* – one before *Kabbalas Shabbos*, another early on *Shabbos* morning, and a third *maamar* after *Mincha*. We *chazered* the *maamarim* over and over, under the guidance of the *chozrim*, carefully recalling *divrei harav*.

"On Sunday and Monday people began arriving from far and near, from dozens of towns and villages. The townsmen of Liadi announced that all the *orchim* would be served meals without payment for the

entire week, until after the forthcoming *Shabbos*. Even some of the *goyishe* townsmen took part in the *hachnasas orchim*, and dozens of them even cleared out their houses to make room for *orchim* to sleep. The manager of the estates of Count Liubermirsky announced that every single day a shipment of food would be delivered to them from the count's estates, including 1200 kg (over 2600 pounds) of flour for bread, as well as three cows and a few calves for *shechita*. In addition, he would deliver a few wagonloads of hay for the visitors' horses.

### CONSIDER

Over what did the chassidim  
rejoice on *Yud-Tes Kislev*?

How can we feel today the same  
joy as they did?

"On Tuesday, *Yud-Tes Kislev*, the chassidim went to *daven* in both the small and the large *beis midrash*, as well as in all the other *batei midrashim* in town. Wherever you went, the place was packed with people. It was announced that after *Mincha Gedola* everyone should gather in the large courtyard of the *beis midrash*, where the Rebbe would say a *maamar*. The courtyard was packed with people, and in the center of the large *beis midrash*, the big *bima* was set up, with a long table on it. Suddenly we heard the huge voice of Reb Shmuel Elye *der Heizeriker* ('the hoarse' – the nickname that jokingly referred to his resonating roar). He announced that the Rebbe was arriving and everyone should be silent. When Shmuel Elye said *Shal* the entire room shook. Soon a group of broad-shouldered *yungeleit* arrived, and like strings, they slipped through the packed crowd, and in just a few short minutes they created a broad path from the door to the *bima*.

"As soon as the Rebbe appeared at the door, we were overcome by awe, a deeply-felt *hadras kavod*. The Rebbe was singing alone, to the words *tze'ena ure'ena*. He was accompanied by a brother on either side, a third brother and two eminent elders behind them, the Rebbe's three sons following, and then the *Tzemaich Tzedek*. Approaching the steps leading up

to the *bima*, the Rebbe began to sing *Keili Atah*, and took his seat at the table, along with those who were with him. As he sang, the awesome *hislahavus* within us grew from moment to moment, and the silence echoing in the *beis midrash* overwhelmed us with an inner dread.

"The Rebbe then began the *maamar* beginning with the words, *pada beshalom nafshi*. When he completed it, the entire *olam* burst out in a joyful *niggun*. In the smaller *yechidus-beis-midrash*, a table had been set for a *seudas hoda'a*. This was attended only by the Rebbe, his sons and brothers, and a few selected elder chassidim."

(סו"ה ש"ש קיץ ה'ש"ת ע' 49)

### CELEBRATING THE YOM-TOV

Amongst chassidim *Yud-Tes Kislev* was traditionally celebrated as an actual *Yom-Tov*. All would dress in their finest attire and would greet each other throughout the day with a meaningful "*gut yom-tov!*"

Tremendous feasts were held in all *shuls* and homes in honor of the occasion. As a child, the Rebbe collected the funds for a special children's feast – this being the only time when he would be involved in something else other than Torah.

(סו"ה ש"ש ע"ב עמ' 19, ימי מלך ח"א ע' 152)

Year after year, as if for the first time, Reb Nachum, the Alter Rebbe's grandson, would relate in patient detail all the events that took place during the stormy time of the Alter Rebbe's arrest. He would describe the tense atmosphere of that period, the libelous accusation the *misnagdim* brought to the czarist authorities, and their exultation when the Alter Rebbe was arrested. Reb Nachum would then describe the Alter Rebbe's stay in prison, his *geula*, the way in which the good news spread, and the Rebbe's return trip to Liozna from the prison in Petersburg. When he recalled the arrest, his voice would drop, as if he were weeping; when he described the liberation, his voice would rise with the *simcha* of a remembered victory. Like the *Megilla* Reading on Purim, he would tell the whole story once at night and again by day. Moreover, if one of the dignified elder chassidim would join the gathering after he had begun, he would go back to the very beginning and start all over again!

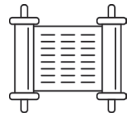
(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 22)

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## REDEEMING CAPTIVES

**At what cost may we redeem captives?**

*Pidyon shevuyim*, redeeming captives, is one of the greatest *mitzvos* in the Torah. Doing so fulfills many positive *mitzvos* (since captivity can be worse than death), and ignoring a captive's plight transgresses multiple *aveiros*. If needed, a *sefer Torah* may be sold to raise money for redeeming captives.<sup>1</sup>

Still, the Gemara teaches that we may not redeem captives for exorbitant prices — “more than their value” — for the sake of *tikun ha'olam*, an establishment for public good. The Gemara explains it in two ways: (1) To avoid excessive financial pressure on the community or (2) not to incentivize the captors to kidnap again for even higher ransoms.<sup>2</sup>

From the perspective of the first issue, relatives or friends of the captives would be allowed to pay the exorbitant price on their own without burdening the community. Indeed, the Bach records a practice to pay more for the captives when there are volunteer donors.<sup>3</sup> This is especially so for an outstanding Torah scholar whose release will uplift the general spirit of the Jewish nation.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, the concern that paying an exorbitant ransom would bring further threats to the Jewish community applies no matter who pays it. For this reason, the Radvaz, Rambam, and Shulchan Aruch prohibit doing so, even when the financial burden is not placed on the community.<sup>5</sup> Still, some allow the captive to be redeemed from his own funds for “self-preservation,” and others allow (and therefore obligate) a husband to redeem his wife at all costs, since she is considered like himself.<sup>6</sup>

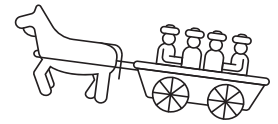
When the captive's life is endangered some say this allows redeeming at any cost.<sup>7</sup> Others counter, however, that every captive is inherently in danger, and still the Mishna prohibits paying above their value.<sup>8</sup> A child in captivity who may be raised as a non-Jew is another possible exception.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these leniencies, the Maharam of Rotenberg famously refused to be released for an exorbitant ransom and passed away in captivity, since he feared that it would lead to other *rabbonim* and community leaders being targeted.

1. בבא בתרא ח ע"ב. רמב"ם הלכות מתנות אביונים פ"ח ה"י. ש"ך י"ד סי' רנ"ב סק"א וט"ז שם סק"ב.  
 2. גיטין מ"ה ע"ב. רמב"ם שם ה"יב. שו"ע י"ד סי' רנ"ב ס"ד.  
 3. ב"ח י"ד סי' רנ"ב.  
 4. יש"ש גיטין פ"ד אות ס"ו.  
 5. רדב"ז על הרמב"ם ב"י ב. ויש לציין שלכה"פ מצד שב ואל תעשה, וראה שם ס"ד ויש חולקים. ויש לעיין על מה כוונתו.  
 6. ראה חוות יאיר סי' ר"ג, רמב"ן ומאירי גיטין מה ע"א. וראה שו"ע אבה"ע סי' ע"ח ס"ב.  
 7. ראה תוס' גיטין נח ע"א. ד"ה כל ממון.  
 8. ראה פת"ש י"ד סי' רנ"ב על ס"ד.  
 9. שו"ת רדב"ז ח"א סי' מ.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

## Our Heroes



### REBBETZIN SHAINA

Rebbetzin Shaina, the wife of the Mittlerer Rebbe, was born to a poor *melamed*, a chossid of the Alter Rebbe. Her father told the Alter Rebbe of his poverty and inability to find proper *shidduchim* for his daughters. The Alter Rebbe assured him that he would make a *shidduch* with one of his children, after which the chossid would have no problem finding appropriate spouses for the rest of his children.

Two grandchildren of the Mittlerer Rebbe and Rebbetzin Shaina, daughters of Rebbetzin Sara, were orphaned from both sides at a young age. The two orphans, Rivkah and Gittel, were raised in the home of the Mittlerer Rebbe. When they reached marriageable age, Rebbetzin Shaina suggested to her son-in-law the Tzemach Tzedek to take one of the women as a *shidduch* for his son, the future Rebbe Maharash. The Tzemach Tzedek told her, “A *shidduch* from Liepli has been suggested with a dowry of twenty thousand ruble. What kind of dowry will be given here?”

The Rebbetzin replied, “*Eishes chaver kechaver* (The wife of a *tzadik* is equal to the *tzadik* himself)! I will give the *chosson* forty years of *eishes chaver kechaver*!” The Tzemach Tzedek agreed, making a “*kinyan*” with Rebbetzin Shaina to

transfer this *zechus*.

The Tzemach Tzedek chose the younger of the two ladies, Rivkah, to be the wife of his son, later known as the Rebbetzin Rivkah. In lieu of the older daughter who relinquished her first-born *zechus* and marriage priority, the Tzemach Tzedek made sure that she marry a worthy *chosson* as well.

On the day of the *chassuna*, the Tzemach Tzedek instructed his son, the Rebbe Maharash to receive a *bracha* from Rebbetzin Shaina. The *chosson* found his grandmother in the kitchen, busily preparing for the festive *seuda*. The Rebbetzin answered offhandedly that the day was long and she would *bentch* him at the time of the *chupah*. Unsatisfied with the response, the Tzemach Tzedek instructed his son to go back and ask to receive her *bracha* now.

Rebbetzin Shaina, paused when she saw that her grandson had returned. Realizing that he would not give up, Rebbetzin Shaina washed her hands and in front of two witnesses put her hands on the *chosson's* head, “May it be HaShem's will that you should be blessed with all the powers that I have inherited from my husband!”

When the Tzemach Tzedek later heard the blessing, he was exceedingly pleased.

## A Moment with The Rebbe



### GET ACTIVE!

A regular participant of the Rebbe's Yud Tes Kislev *farbrengens* could not attend one year due to his wife's illness. As a way of calming his distress, he substituted the *farbrengen* with reading letters of the Baal Shem Tov.

Later, he called the Rebbes secretariat, and asked Reb Leibel Groner to pass this on to the Rebbe.

But the Rebbe did not accept the replacement. “*Peulos*” was the response.

After participating in the 5733 Yud Tes Kislev *farbrengen* at Kfar Chabad, Israeli Major-General and author Avraham Adan

wrote to the Rebbe his impressions. “I had a special experience and a feeling of elevation,” he wrote.

“As a Tzahal person, and especially as a commander” the Rebbe responded in writing, “it is certainly superfluous to emphasize that what counts in the army is action. To the point that one must put aside intellect, to follow orders...”

“Therefore,” concluded the Rebbe, “I hope that the ‘special experience and a feeling of elevation’ will be translated to action.”

(*Hiskashrus Issue 245; Igros Kodesh vol. 28 p. 135*)