

HERE'S *my* STORY

PERSONAL INVITATION

RABBI LEVI BUKIET

In the early 1980s, I arrived in Brooklyn to celebrate the final days of *Sukkos* with the Rebbe. It was the morning of *Hoshana Rabba*, the last of the festival's "intermediate days." That morning the Rebbe was handing out the traditional "*lekach*," honey cake, in his *sukkah*, and people were lined up to receive a piece of cake and share a quick moment with the Rebbe. Standing ahead of me in line was a young fellow, dressed hippie-style in sloppy jeans and sporting an unkempt bush of hair. Standing behind me in line was a distinguished Satmar *chasid*, a Rosh Yeshiva in the Satmar *yeshiva* in Williamsburg.

As the unkempt fellow approached, the Rebbe asked him, "Where are you going to be tonight for the *hakofos*?" — referring to the traditional dancing with the Torah.

The man answered, "I have no plans to be anywhere for *hakofos* tonight or any other night."

"It would be my great honor and privilege," the Rebbe replied, "if you would attend *hakofos* tonight with me in the synagogue."

The fellow thanked the Rebbe for his invitation, but remained noncommittal. "I'll think about it," he said, and walked away.

I was next in line. I received my *lekach* from the Rebbe without incident. Just behind me was the Satmar *chasid*. As he approached the Rebbe, I turned back, and I heard as the Rebbe addressed him: "I see that you're wondering why I'm pleading with this fellow to come to *hakofos* tonight. What connection do I have with him?"

"The answer is clearly articulated in the book *Tehillah L'Moshe*."

The Rebbe paused and added, "Do you know what I'm alluding to in *Tehillah L'Moshe*?"

The *chasid* replied that he didn't know.



The Rebbe smiled. "It was authored by one of your Rebbes!"

The *chasid*, obviously mystified, could only stand there. He shrugged his shoulders, puzzled.

And then the Rebbe shared the teaching at length. I tried very hard to hear and understand, and thereafter wrote it down to the best of my recollection.

First, a brief introduction: The book *Tehillah L'Moshe* was written by Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum, also known as the *Yismach Moshe*, who lived in the early 1800s. A student of the Chozeh of Lublin, he served as the Rabbi of Przemyśl and later as the Rebbe of Ujhely, Hungary. His descendants became the great *chasidic* leaders of the communities of Sighet and Satmar. This teaching that the Rebbe imparted comes from his commentary on the *Tehillim*, *Tehillah L'Moshe*.

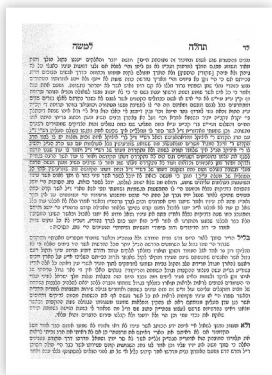
Now, here's what I heard the Rebbe telling the Satmar Rosh Yeshiva, standing at the door of his *sukkah*:

continued on reverse

MY ENCOUNTER
with the REBBE

An oral history project dedicated to documenting the life of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. The story is one of thousands recorded in the 800 videotaped interviews conducted to date. Please share your comments and suggestions. mystory@jemedi.org

"The Yismach Moshe writes a wondrous story in great detail. Reb Itzikel of Drobitch — he was the father of Rabbi Michel of Zlotchev, the renowned disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and the Magid of Mezritch — once encountered Rashi in the Heavens." Rashi is the renowned commentator on the Torah.



Tehillah L'Moshe

"Rashi asked Reb Itzikel: 'Why is there such a commotion On High about the greatness of your son?' How did Reb Michel merit such praise, Rashi wanted to know.

"Reb Itzikel replied that his son studies Torah purely for the sake of Heaven.

"But aren't there many who do the same?" Rashi responded, unsatisfied.

"My son fasts and deprives his body of worldly pleasures," replied Reb Itzikel.

"But aren't there many who do the same?"

"My son gives away huge sums of money to the poor," replied Reb Itzikel. But Rashi was still unsatisfied. 'Aren't there many who do the same?' he asked.

"Finally, Reb Itzikel replied, 'My son has made many *baalei teshuvah* across the world. He returned many from the path of sin to their Father in Heaven."

When Rashi heard this response, he was finally satisfied. He understood clearly why the heavenly angels are so excited about the greatness of Reb Michel."

Throughout the time the Rebbe was speaking — it must have taken a least a couple of minutes — the Satmar *chasid* stood listening with great respect. When he finished, the *chasid* thanked the Rebbe and said softly, "*Ich hob git farshtanen*. I understood very well."

As the *chasid* began to walk away, the Rebbe smiled and said, "Have a good Yom Tov."

There's a little postscript to this story. After the formal *hakofos* in 770 would finish and the Rebbe had left the synagogue, many of the more hearty *chasidim* would stay on until the next morning, dancing, singing, and celebrating the joyous festival as only *chasidim* can. Early

the next morning, amongst the dancers, I suddenly saw the young fellow whom the Rebbe had personally invited the previous afternoon.

I guess he couldn't resist that invitation after all.

Rabbi Levi Bukiet lives with his family in Chicago, Illinois. The story the Rebbe told can be found in Tehillah L'Moshe, page 34.

לע"נ ר' ישראל יעקב זוזגותו מרת קריינא ע"ה לאקשין
ע"י בנייהם ר' נחמן ור' אברהם ומשפחתם שיחי

This week in...

> **5728 — 1967**, Rabbi Moshe Leib Rodstein, one of the Rebbe's secretaries, passed away. Rabbi Rodstein had previously served as a secretary to the Rebbe Rayatz. The Rebbe took part in the funeral, escorting the casket from 770 to cemetery. The Rebbe instructed that several lines of a discourse by the Rebbe Rayatz delivered between the years 1939 and 1950 be studied at the *shiva* house every day.¹ 8 Cheshvan

> **5734 — 1973**, in the Shabbos address, the Rebbe spoke of the many miracles that had taken place during the Yom Kippur War. The Rebbe strongly criticized the fact that the IDF didn't immediately attack Damascus in Syria. "The IDF could have easily taken over Damascus, leaving the Syrians without a capital city — they wouldn't even have a place to receive their arms shipments from the Russians, effectively forcing Syria to accept a peace agreement right away."² 2 Cheshvan

> **5752 — 1991**, Israel's Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu visited the Rebbe. Meeting in Lubavitch's Central Library adjacent to 770, they discussed words of Torah and specifically spoke about *Moshiach*. The Rebbe asked him to issue a rabbinic decree that *Moshiach* must come. After the conversation with Rabbi Eliyahu's entourage and several of the Rebbe's secretaries in attendance, the Rebbe and Rabbi Eliyahu met in private.³ 6 Cheshvan

1. Diary of Rabbi Yehuda Leib Groner 2. Sichos Kodesh 5734 Vol. 1, p. 117-118
3. Beis Chayenu, Cheshvan, 5752

In memory of the noted educator
Rabbi Isaac Mintz
On the occasion of his 20th yahrzeit
2 Cheshvan

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