

HERE'S *my* STORY

"THANK YOU FOR YOUR BLESSING"

RABBI AHARON ELIEZER CEITLIN

I was a *yeshiva* student on *shlichus* in Safed, Israel, in 1984. In addition to our own full-time studies, we were involved in many outreach activities across the city, including running a kindergarten program and giving Torah classes.

On several occasions, the Rebbe had asked that his *chasidim* report on their outreach activities once a month, preferably at the beginning of each month, on *Rosh Chodesh*. Usually, I would be the one to write the report of our activities on behalf of the *yeshiva* administration.

Writing a report to the Rebbe is no simple matter. Several days before, I would begin to consider what I would report and how I would write it. And you don't just dash off a letter to the Rebbe in half an hour. You need to find a block of several hours in order to prepare yourself, and then to write it properly. And then you need to decide what to write first, what deserves to be mentioned, and what to leave out. Of course, we used a typewriter - we didn't have computers in those days.

The month of *Adar* had been hectic, with lots of activities. Suddenly we were in *Nissan*, and I still hadn't written the report for *Adar*. There was so much to report: *Purim* celebrations, preparations for *Pesach*, many different outreach projects.

Before I knew it, it was the eleventh of *Nissan*, the Rebbe's birthday, and I still hadn't written the report.

"This is it," I told myself. "No matter what, I'm writing



this report tonight." That night, I wrote and wrote. It was 3 a.m. when I was finished; I had written eight pages.

I felt so uplifted. There were so many good things in it. So much had been done to spread *yiddishkeit*, plus a number of activities in honor of the Rebbe's birthday. I was sure they'd bring the Rebbe much *nachas*.

But then it occurred to me. "I can't just sign off. I must finish the letter appropriately, with a blessing for the Rebbe's birthday!"

Now, this was a problem. As I saw it at the time, a *yeshiva* student doesn't give the Rebbe a *bracha* - he asks for a *bracha* from the Rebbe! From time to time, on special occasions, an elder *chosid* would stand up at a *farbrengen*, a *chasidic* gathering, and would bless the Rebbe in the name of the entire community; but never a young student!

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MY ENCOUNTER
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But then I said to myself, "So what? It doesn't matter who I am! I'll give the Rebbe a *bracha* in the name of the administration.

"On the other hand, can I give the Rebbe *bracha* on their behalf, when I'm really acting on my own? I must ask permission!" This dilemma was raging inside my head.



I knew that if I asked, there would be so many different opinions, that the report would never go out before Pesach. "Okay," I thought,

"I'll sign the letter in the name of the administration, as I always do, and then I'll add a *bracha* in my own name."

But no, that wouldn't be nice! Would that mean that they're not blessing the Rebbe on his birthday, only I, the young student?"

Back and forth I went. It was almost morning. Finally, I made my decision: I wrote a wholehearted *bracha* and signed off, "The Administration."

In the morning, I sent the letter off before anyone could ask to see the report, as they occasionally did. I rushed around all morning so that they should see how busy I was with Pesach preparations, too busy to be bothered.

Three weeks went by. One clear day, a letter arrived at the yeshiva from the Rebbe. This was a cause for celebration – the thin blue airmail envelope, with the Rebbe's name and his return address, 770 Eastern Parkway.

Inside the envelope were two letters folded separately. This was quite unusual. Sometimes you might receive a two-page letter. But two pieces of paper folded separately?

Inside were two two identical letters. One was addressed to the administration, and one was addressed to me personally: "I received your letter...thank you very much. My blessings for the holiday of Pesach; may it bring you

freedom from all obstacles, spiritual as well as physical. Serve Hashem with joy..."

But wait! At the end of my letter, at the bottom, there were two more lines. "Thank you for your blessing," the Rebbe had written, "When you bless another person, G-d, in turn, blesses you."

It was there in black and white. I couldn't believe my eyes. I hadn't breathed a word about what I had done to a soul. But the Rebbe knew what was in my heart! The Rebbe felt it. It's that simple.

Rabbi Aharon Eliezer Ceitlin is a Chabad shliach living with his family in Safed, Israel. He was interviewed in the My Encounter studio in New York in March, 2012.

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This week in...

- > **5718—1958**, the first *Likkutei Sichos* pamphlet was published and distributed in 770 in honor of Shavuos. 6 Sivan
- > **5734—1974**, at a Shabbos *farbrengen*, the Rebbe launched the Campaign to fill one's home with Torah books, urging Jewish families to acquire Jewish books. 4 Sivan¹
- > **5750—1990**, the Rebbe launched a new campaign based on the statement in the first chapter of Ethics of the Fathers, "Raise up many students," that each individual should give a Torah class to ten people. 6 Sivan²

1. *Sichos Kodesh* Volume 2, p. 179. 2. *Sefer Hisvaadous* 5750 Vol. 3, p. 267.



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