



FINDING THE *Joy*

TEMMI HADAR

It's the 2nd of Tammuz. Tonight is Gimmel Tammuz. I'm woefully unprepared for it. I should have been learning and teaching Chassidus, watching videos of *farbrengens* or dollars, or reading letters the Rebbe wrote.

But I've done nothing.

I've barely managed to make it through the week.

My suppers were pretty pathetic. My kids barely had food for lunch one day, because I didn't make it to the shops.

My baby spent the entire morning yesterday screaming.

But now it's Friday. Erev Shabbos.

I'm buying food. Making challah. Dropping off kids at school.

Keeping appointments.

My day is a blur of ordinary.

Is this what I am supposed to be doing?

I was blessed to be born on *shlichus*.

Some of my earliest memories are of trips to New York.

I have a vague memory of standing in line for dollars.

I don't remember meeting the Rebbe. Just the time we spent in line. It seemed like hours. We were dressed in our best Shabbos dresses. Collars

sparkling and bows tied in back. It was hot. We were filled with anticipation. That's all I remember.

Another trip. Waiting in the women's section of 770. The anxious expectation. Perhaps the Rebbe would come out on the balcony.

And then the Rebbe came out.

The holiness, and the longing, were palpable. But I was a little girl...

Then it was Sunday, Gimmel Tammuz. I woke up to learn that my father was on the way to New York. I went to Chabad House with my family, and everyone else. We said *Tehillim*.

I pretended to. When my sister asked me what I was up to, I said *kapitel ayin*. She accused me of lying. I told her I wasn't, wondering how she knew I wasn't telling the truth.

I was seven.

I'm 13.

It's Gimmel Tammuz. I am in day camp. I'm sitting in the hall by the pay phone. Underneath the place where my father keeps his *tallis*.

We are telling stories about the Rebbe. I'm sitting with Mimi and Raizel. It's hot and my jean skirt is sticking to my legs.

But in low voices we share stories. Stories of our families and the Rebbe. Mimi shares stories her father told her of working in the Rebbe's house.

Somehow we feel like adults, doing something right.

I'm 16 and in 12th grade. It's Friday morning.

And every Friday after *davening* we watch a video of the Rebbe.

I don't remember the video.

But as we come in to *Chumash* class after *davening* my teacher is standing, and she has tears in her eyes.

She talks to us about the Rebbe.

I wish, she says, her voice choking, I wish you would know how much the Rebbe cares for each one of you.

I'm 21.

I'm at the Ohel.



I'm writing a letter to ask for a *brachah* for my engagement.

It's my 22nd birthday.

I'm at the Ohel again. Pregnant with a very sick baby. Writing for a *brachah* for a healthy pregnancy.

We lose the pregnancy.

I'm in a strange country with literally nobody I know.

I've gone on *shlichus* to South Africa.

And 10 months after we arrive to continue the job the Rebbe dedicated his life to, finally, we have a healthy baby girl.

And then another one.

And two boys after that.

One of my baby's first words is "Rebbe." Pointing to the Rebbe's photo hanging over the fireplace.

Sometimes I feel paralyzed by indecision.

How do we know what we are supposed to do with our lives?

What does G-d want?

But when I do take the time to learn Chassidus, things make sense.

It's the only place I ever found the answers to my questions.

Chassidus helps me make sense of the world.

And sometimes in this physical hedonistic world there are cracks and light from the Divine that filter in.

My daughter standing solemnly by the picture of the Rebbe reading her *pahn*, which includes her *hachlatah* to give *tzedakah* daily.

My toddler turning to me out of the blue and saying, "Hashem. Happy."

I can't tell you personal experiences that I've had with the Rebbe.

I'm not my parents' generation, who sent a letter to the Rebbe with a list of different places to go on *shlichus*, and received direct and clear guidance.

I'm not my grandfather. I didn't sit at meals with the Rebbe.

But from my earliest memories there was always the Rebbe's presence.

The picture on the wall, the teachings on the shelf, the *niggunim* we sang, the debates we had. And always, how can we fulfill the Rebbe's requests of his *chassidim*?

How to be a *chossid*?

I don't feel like I am transforming the world.

But I think of the Rebbe's words.

"I've done all I can," he said. "Now it's up to you."

It's up to me.
 The responsibility.
 I don't think I can.
 But I think of the Rebbe's love for his *chassidim*.
 I think of how much the Rebbe believes in me.
 Just plain ordinary little me.
 Who gets overwhelmed with the day-to-day running
 of a house full of little children (*baruch Hashem*).
 Who is easily distracted by Instagram and Whatsapp.
 Somehow, the Rebbe believes in me.
 The Rebbe asked me to change the world.
 To finish two millennia of work to bring Moshiach.
 And how can I do that?
 Some days I am not even sure myself.
 But I know that every act of connection, every *niggun*
 I sing with my children or hum as I rock my baby to
 sleep, every time I talk about Hashem with strangers on
 line at the shops, or with my kids as we drive from one
 errand to the next, this is bringing us one step closer.
 I can hear the Rebbe's words in my head, reminding
 me that we need to do all we can.
 And sometimes I can only take small steps. But always
 I try and move forward.
 One step. One minute.
 So yesterday was chaos and survival. But today?
 Today is a new day.
 And I'm taking one more step forward.
 I'll watch a video of the Rebbe now.
 Join an online *farbrengen*.
 For a minute. Or maybe ten. Maybe an hour, or more.
 I'll sing *niggunim* with my children. We will
 share stories.
 We will talk about the Rebbe's love for us.
 Our mission—the one the Rebbe has given to us.
 I'll tell them how the Rebbe believes in us.
 How the Rebbe told us to change the world.
 I'll remind them, and mostly I'll remind myself, how
 everything we do can bring Moshiach one step closer,
 starting right now. ❧



*Temmi Hadar, born and raised on
 shlichus in Seattle, is now living about
 a million miles away in Johannesburg,
 South Africa. This is the fourth
 installment of her column, "Finding
 the Joy," in which she ponders the
 meaning of life while perpetually*

*sleep-deprived and attempting to juggle the roles of
 mother, wife, shlucha, teacher, writer and human being.*

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