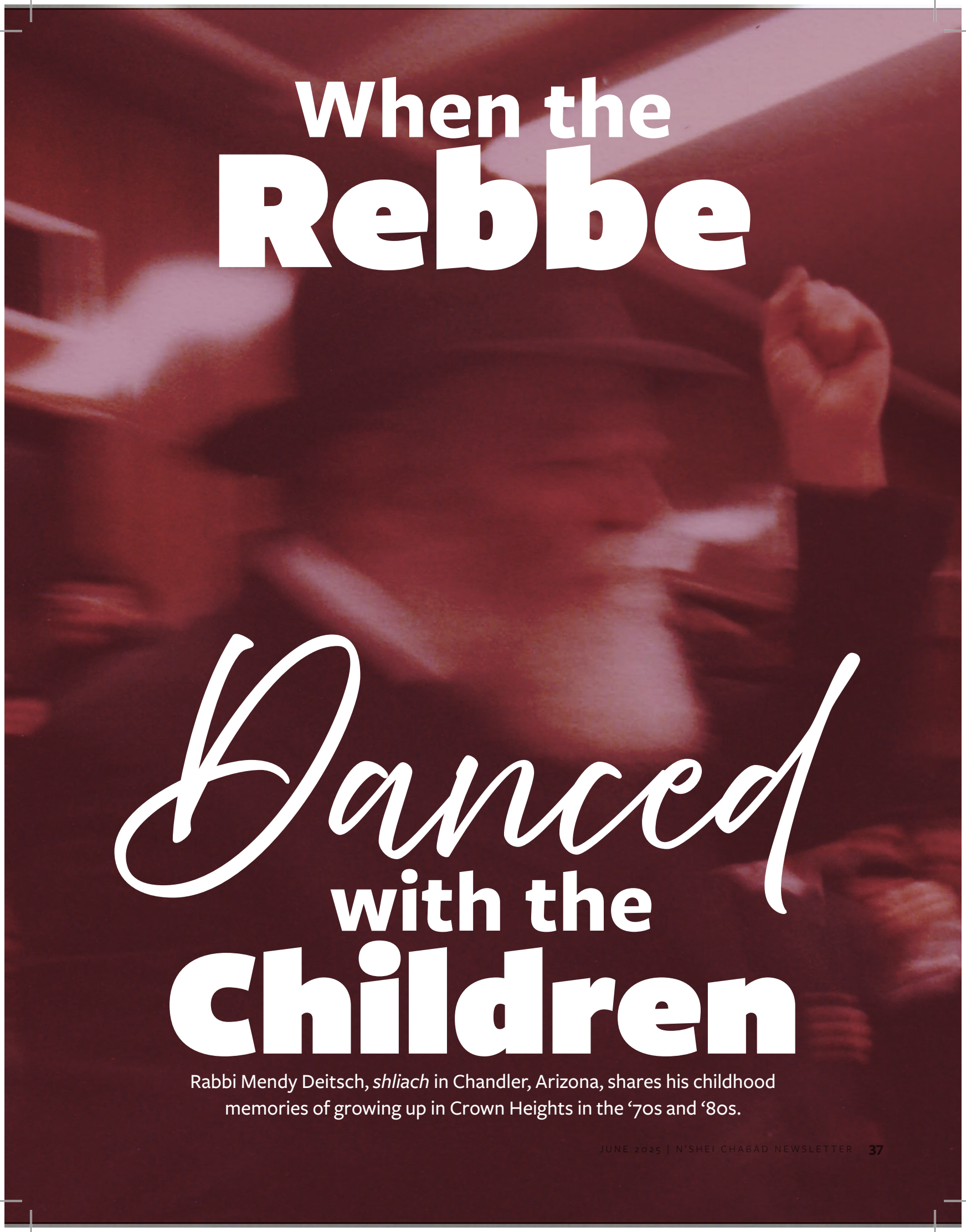




When the
Rebbe

Danced
with the
Children

Rabbi Mendy Deitsch, *shliach* in Chandler, Arizona, shares his childhood memories of growing up in Crown Heights in the '70s and '80s.

Having had the good fortune to grow up in Crown Heights, my friends and I have witnessed firsthand how the Rebbe transformed the world. Although I no longer live there, having gone on *shlichus* 27 years ago, the life experiences remain vivid, continually remembered, learned from, and lived by. Overall, I consider our childhood blessed, beautiful, fortunate, gratifying, unique, and uplifting.

From the dedicated, intelligent, and interesting teachers who taught us in Oholei Torah, to the cast of characters who stood near us in shul and on the street—the extremely colorful characters who lined the sidewalks, the *tzedakah* collectors, even the pitiful drunks who sat on the sidewalk stumps—each one had an impact on how we experienced the world.

There was Leibel the boxer; we knew to get out of his way if we heard so much as the tiniest grumble from him.

There was Yankel the cat guy who lived in a basement on Brooklyn Avenue; he tended to the cats and let them roam freely in and around the Skverer Mikvah.

Then there were the true heroes, who we were too young to appreciate then...

There was sweet Bubbe Maryasha¹ who was a fixture standing in front of 770 after *farbrengens* collecting money for one worthy cause or another. You mostly heard from her, “*Tzedakah Oholei Torah, tzedakah Oholei Torah!*”

We were fortunate to grow up in a neighborhood with many special souls who survived the hellish nightmares of the Holocaust or the Siberian gulag, even though we took them for granted then.

Mr. and Mrs. Farkash from Singer’s grocery store—we would stand at the bus stop in the morning watching a customer take a bite out of a juicy sour tomato from the pickle barrel in front of the store. Mrs. Farkash would wrap those pickles or sour tomatoes in newspaper for our mothers to bring home before Shabbos. We would see or to be more precise stare at the numbers on the Farkashes’ arms as they reached in to grab the floating pickle. On a slow day they would share a little, very



Mendy Deitsch at his bar mitzvah on 28 Adar Aleph 5746 (March 9, 1986).

little, about their lives in the concentration camps.

Then there were the many incredible *baalei teshuvah*, newcomers who landed in this neighborhood from other backgrounds with nothing but a *pintele Yid* and the determination to learn to live as Yidden; they had the most to teach us, if we only stopped to look and listen and think about what we were seeing. But we were little boys then. We can do that thinking only now.

Oh, the pure joy we felt as children on cold, dark nights on the way home from school, stopping in to 770 (I must confess) not to *daven* or learn, but to take the candles used for *davening* and drop them into boiling hot cups of water and watch, mesmerized, as they melted, only to dip our fingers in them and wait for the wax to form around our burning hands and then pull off the wax now shaped as our fingers.

I now wonder who cleaned up after us...

THE REBBE

It’s almost impossible to describe a specific moment with the Rebbe; it’s like asking someone to pinpoint the most precious breath of air they took on any given day. The Rebbe was our life; our schedule and conversation surrounded only the Rebbe; and 770 was our home base, our playground, and our go-to place for comfort and peace.

We lived and breathed the Rebbe.

Every week, it was pretty much a given that we kids of seven or eight years old returned home with torn pants from *valgaring* on the floor of 770; it was part of our life and daily routine.

I once told my mother that I could understand the narrative told by Reb Levi Yitzchok of Barditchev. Twice we were granted the Bais Hamikdash, and twice it was taken from us. Now, Hashem reveals it to us annually, preserving it for a time when we can maintain it permanently. Similarly, a Crown Heights mother buys her son a new suit twice and ultimately stores the third one in her closet until he matures, showing it to him once a year.

Sometimes, we saw the Rebbe as we walked home from school, either entering or exiting his car. Sometimes, we watched the Rebbe go into his office, occasionally receiving *tzedakah* from him to put into the large wooden *pushka* that hangs in the front hallway of 770. It was because of short kids like me who couldn't reach the top slot that they made a lower slot in the *pushka*.

Friday night *davening* was a special treat. When many members of the local shuls left Crown Heights in the 1970s and moved to other neighborhoods, the neighborhood shuls almost didn't have *minyanim*, and the Rebbe encouraged his *chassidim* to strengthen those shuls. At that point, my father, Reb Zalman Yuda Deitsch, *a"h*,² made a *hachlatah* to do as the Rebbe had asked, and he would *daven* Friday nights in the Skverer *shtiebel* on Kingston Avenue (where Mikvah Meir-Levy's Shul is today). Once we turned eight or nine years old, we got permission to *daven* in 770, while my father stayed with my younger brothers in the Skverer *shtiebel*.

770 IN MY CHILDHOOD

When we were kids in the '70s and '80s, we watched the Rebbe *daven* on a beautiful handcrafted Persian rug rolled out to the *shtender* with a special chair next to it.

The Vaad Hamesader would build a stage for the Rebbe only for Tishrei, and then it was removed. On a typical Friday night in those years, there was plenty of room to walk around and

come and go from the front of 770 to the back.

In the later years, a table was placed to block the weekly overflow crowd from getting too close to the *aron kodesh*, but when we were kids, Lubavitch was smaller and there was no need for it.

We boys would stand right behind the Rebbe, often talking, and sometimes fighting, pushing, and shoving. There were probably 20 or 30 of us.

Only now as an adult do I realize how unusual it is for children to be up front in an adult venue like shul. In our society kids are relegated to the back if they're invited at all. The Rebbe not just allowing but welcoming the children to *daven* with him in front is unique and illustrates how much he loved the children and the tremendous potential he saw in them.

When we *davened*, it was with *chayus*, looking in the *siddur*, singing or saying the words out loud. But we didn't always behave the way we should have; after all, we were kids, and *Oholei toraniks*³ on top of that.

Today, as I reflect on those moments, it surprises me that no one stopped us or attempted to correct our behavior in shul. The Rebbe stood there and lovingly encouraged us to continue *davening* and singing, and he completely ignored the childish behaviors. We felt how the Rebbe was encouraging us and helping us focus on who we really are,

and that he recognized that the day would come when we would outgrow our immature conduct.

When Reb Sholom Ber Harlig, now a *shliach* in California, turned three, his grandfather, Reb Mordechai Harlig, took him to the Rebbe for *upshern*. The *zaide* asked the Rebbe to give the child a *brachah*. The Rebbe said, "*Ich ken em, er davent mit mir*," because his father, Reb Meir Harlig, would bring the little boy to the Rebbe's *minchah* every day.

We didn't understand then what an honor we had, what a priceless gift; we were *davening* together with the Rebbe, just feet away from him, on the edge of the same carpet the Rebbe was standing on.

TISHREI IN 770

Our family was *zocheh* to have seats for the Yamim Nora'im just eight rows behind the Rebbe. The Rebbe was on a raised

The Rebbe stood there and lovingly encouraged us to continue *davening* and singing, and he completely ignored the childish behaviors.

platform, and we were there, gazing and learning from every movement, every *tenuah*.

We were close enough to see but not hear when the Rebbe would instruct Rabbi Leibel Groner and Rabbi Binyomin Klein, the Rebbe's *mazkirim*, to do something (we didn't know what); we watched the way they carried the bags of *pahnim* and placed them on the table to the Rebbe's left against the *mizrach* wall, as the Rebbe came in to *davening*. The Rebbe carried the *shofros*. We saw how the Rebbe would carefully place his *siddur* on the *shtender* and take the *Tehillim* from on top of his *shtender* to say *Tehillim*.

Everything about Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur was special and intense and very often made our hearts pound; we didn't sit with our friends on those days, but with our families. There was a totally different atmosphere in the shul than the rest of the year.

Every moment in the Rebbe's presence made a deep, lasting impression. There are so many special moments that still send shivers down my spine when I think about them.

For example, after *tekios*, the Rebbe would go back to his place at the *mizrach* wall and do a slow 360-degree turn, to look at everyone in 770. Being so close afforded us the opportunity to see the Rebbe's shining face. As a family that has not been blessed with the gift of height, even though we were so close, we still had to jump up and down to get a quick glimpse as the Rebbe turned around to see everyone. Yet the moment we caught a glimpse of how the Rebbe gazed into the core of our beings, we felt uplifted. We knew Hashem was hearing our *tefillos*, and we felt ready for a new year.

Because of where our seats were, we were also very close to the *bimah* where *tekios* took place. We could see and hear each *tenuah* and how the Rebbe took the *pahnim* in the big brown bags from the front of 770 and brought them to the *bimah*, with the *mazkirim* bringing the rest of the bags. And how the Rebbe placed them on the *bimah*, rearranging them so that they were just where they had to be. We got to hear the way the Rebbe said the *brachos* and how the Rebbe put his *talis* over his holy head and over the *pahnim* that the Yidden from around the world

had sent to the Rebbe. Some years you could hear crying; other years, it was faster. Sometimes, the Rebbe stood covered for longer, and other times shorter.

The Rebbe said the *brachos* before *tekios*, with the tune clear enough to cause you to shake in your place. We witnessed how the Rebbe took the *shofar* so tenderly and put it to his lips, and we waited in silent respect for each *tekiah*, *shevarim*, *teruah*.

Now, while we were close, we were not as close as those who were right in front of the Rebbe in the space called "the washing machine." I distinctly remember what happened one year with my cousin Shoki Deitsch, who is a little older than I am. He said to his brothers that he wanted to be even closer. Instead of squeezing on the bench to see and hear, he went into the middle to also feel the intensity. This amazed me, the level of *mesiras nefesh* to be just a few feet closer to the Rebbe.

We can stand at a distance, and, true, we can see everything, hear everything, feel everything. You're even breaking a sweat. But sometimes we need to jump into the middle of things. We must not be content with observing. We need to be part of it; we need to experience it with our hands, our feet, our breath and every fiber of our being. That can only be done by experiencing the flow and energy of being pushed and moved from one spot to the next and miraculously ending up right back in the place you were in a moment ago. You've got to feel your feet on the ground yet at the same time be suspended in midair by the sheer pressure of those around you. That power permeated your entire being.

It was a humbling experience to see the Rebbe do *Koirim*. The Rebbe did it so fast, falling to the ground and standing up just like that. In later years, we saw how Rabbi Groner would place the Rebbe's chair next to the Rebbe so the Rebbe could lean on it for support as he stood up.

It was only after the Rebbe did *Koirim* that the rest of the packed shul would miraculously find space to do *Koirim*. Our family had the whole bench. There was Reb Dovid Deitsch and his sons and grandsons, Reb Mordechai Rivkin (whose wife is a Deitsch) and his sons and grandsons, and my father and us kids. In each single spot, we fit four or five people. There was

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no problem; we made it work. Oh, how it felt to sit on the back part of the bench, while we held the *machzor* close to our face, and the person standing in front of you held his *machzor* up, while the person sitting on the bench leaned his *machzor* on your back, and another one of us sat on the back of the bench behind the person sitting.

I remember the warm feeling of sitting there and feeling the heartfelt prayer of the Russian *chossid* who had survived the gulags, Rabbi Eliyahu Moshe Liss, *a"h*, crying while saying the words of *davening* so carefully, enunciating each word clearly and slowly. You could feel the excitement and spiritual strength coming from his back as he sat hunched over, repeating each word with fire and love, something that he was unable to do while in Russian labor camps.

TZIVOS HASHEM AND CHILDREN'S RALLIES

We have the *zechus* to be the generation of children growing up during the time when the Rebbe began Tzivos Hashem, the army of Hashem made up of children. All the *sichos* and directives, missions and instructions from our commander-in-chief, the Rebbe, that are given to the soldiers today were said to us during rallies in 770.

There were many rallies throughout the year when the Rebbe came down to talk to us kids, spending over two hours each time. I can't believe that what I just wrote only takes one line. Let it sink in. The Rebbe took out time from his holy time, his busy schedule, from learning, *davening*, reading and replying to phone calls and letters, visiting the Ohel, overseeing countless *mosdos*, making decisions that impacted thousands of lives, spending time with the Rebbetzin, etc., and saw nothing more valuable than to spend it with kids under bar and bas mitzvah!

Many times a year, not once a year, not even five times a year, but closer to eight or nine times a year, for *yamim tovim*, *yemei depagra*, when we went to camp, when we returned from camp, even on a quiet day in Cheshvan, the Rebbe held rallies for us children. The Rebbe was there with us for *minchah* as we sang *Ashrei* and *Aleinu*, as we answered *Amein Yehei Shmei Rabbah* out loud, listening to the recital of the 12 *Pesukim*, and, most astonishing of all, the Rebbe stood and listened as we sang our camp songs.

The Rebbe took the time to listen to the Tzivos Hashem contests and hear the winners announced. The Rebbe clapped for the winner, then the Rebbe in a clear and strong voice gave us children, us rambunctious kids, our marching orders. He put us in charge of winning over our *yetzer hara*, and of bringing Moshiach!

Not only were we not ignored, not only were we heard, but we were addressed directly for a long time, even when our minds began to wander and we lost our *zitsfleish*. The Rebbe spoke to us in a gentle, caring voice, spoke to our hearts. Maybe not then, but certainly we hear it now. He spoke directly to our *neshamos*.

Looking back, it is embarrassing that we did not show the proper respect to the Rebbe, and that we spoke and played while the Rebbe was talking to us. But the Rebbe knew better, and he kept talking to us, knowing full well that our *neshamos* were listening. Today, we get to learn the *sichos* said at those rallies and hopefully try to follow the directives the Rebbe set out for us and all children all over the world for all times.

It is not only the children at that time that the Rebbe was speaking to; it was also the future adults in front of him. Although the children (and I include myself) unfortunately



did not appreciate what we had at the time, the Rebbe continued to speak to us and spend time with us.

And then the Rebbe took even more of his precious time to reward us. He stood and gave us dimes—sometimes one, sometimes two, sometimes three. The Rebbe made it clear on at least one occasion that one dime is for *tzedakah* and another is for us to use as we want. The Rebbe encouraged us to give *tzedakah* and at the same time cared enough to make sure we also had some spending money. Sometimes it was through our teachers or counselors, and other times it was handed directly to us; each child got to walk past the Rebbe and receive the dime directly from his holy hand.

Speaking of coins, the Rebbe gave coins for *tzedakah* to the kids who were standing by the *shvil* before or after *davening*, while walking in or out of 770. We knew if we stood there we had a good chance of seeing the Rebbe, and maybe receiving coins.

On Simchas Torah 5741 (1980), the year the Rebbe started Tzivos Hashem, 770 was packed from wall to wall and ceiling to floor. My father squeezed into his place, each year with one more child in tow. By that year, we were five boys coming to 770 on Simchas Torah. I was sitting on my father's shoulders by the Rebbe's *hakafos* when all of a sudden, I felt myself being lifted up and passed over the heads of the *chassidim* in 770, from one man to the next until I found myself standing in the middle of 770 right next to the Rebbe. Other kids had also been passed up by the same method. The Rebbe smiled at us kids while holding his special *Sefer Torah* while we waited for all the kids to make it to the center from all around the shul. Soon the singing began, and then, slowly but surely, the Rebbe started to dance with us kids, up and down, up and down. The singing in the shul got louder and louder. The *hakafos niggun*, or maybe it was Reb Levik's *Niggun*, was sung with more and more *chayus*, more energy, more joy.

It is remarkable that the Rebbe wanted to dance with us kids, not with the *eltere chassidim* or the *baalei mesiras nefesh*. What a *zechus* we had. How can we ever repay the Rebbe for the time he spent with us, for the attention he gave us? Maybe we just need to get up and dance more, as we danced then, until we bring Moshiach.

One Shabbos morning in 770 I was singing *Hu Elokeinu* with a lot of spunk and later someone approached my father, telling him that they were starting a choir for the boys in Tzivos Hashem, and he wanted to know if my father would send his sons to join. My brother Shaya and I joined the choir under the leadership of Avraham Asher Rosenberg. Later it moved to Flatbush and changed its name from Tzivos Hashem Choir to Tzlil V'zemer. That year on Motzoei Simchas Torah 5742 (1981), we got to sing by the Rebbe during *Kos Shel Brachah*. It was way past our bedtime but things like time and space were never factors; after all, we are *chassidim*, and a *chossid* is an extension of the Rebbe, who is completely above the laws of nature.

Late at night, dressed in our matching red choir vests, we young kids (around eight or nine years old at the time) were invited to sing in front of the Rebbe. We sang a series of songs, mostly Lubavitcher *niggunim*, and some English tunes, accompanied by the Piamentas. And I had the *zechus* (as the shortest and squeakiest kid) to say the *passuk* of *Torah Tzivah* and also *Yechi* while the choir repeated the words after me and the Rebbe gave out *Kos Shel Brachah*. At one point, the Rebbe put the *becher* down and started swinging his holy hand over and over again, vigorously, like a conductor. After we went down to leave, the Rebbe called us back and made sure each of us received some *Kos Shel Brachah*. Yes, the Rebbe wanted to make sure that each of us knew how much our singing was appreciated and that we mattered.

When we grew older and became *bachurim*, we also stayed



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the whole *Kos Shel Brachah* and sang. Some years we sang all the Rebbe's *niggunim* from *Tehillim*, other years we sang *lebedike* Lubavitcher *niggunim*. We stood there and sang. We *bachurim* were there before the Rebbe came in and left way after the Rebbe went upstairs. We lived and breathed 770 as children and continued to do so as *bachurim*.

Over the years, it was the *bachurim* who stood by the Rebbe as he distributed dollars to each *chossid*. We sang as the Rebbe stood for hours giving out *kuntreisim* and remained in the Rebbe's presence until the end of each *challukah*.

PESACH

After Chof Beis Shvat 5788 (1988) when the Rebbetzin passed away, we were not sure where or how the Rebbe would have the *Seder*. While my family would always go to our grandparents in Springfield for Pesach, that year my brothers and I decided to stay home alone and be with the Rebbe. Since our parents were a few hundred miles away, we decided to hang around 770 for the *Seder* night. Sure enough, it was late into the *Seder* when the Rebbe came out with a candle and a *Haggadah* to the side door for *Shfoich Chamascha*. There were only a few dozen *bachurim* there the first night, but by the second night, there was a much larger crowd once everyone heard what had happened the first night.

TAHALUCHAH

After returning to Crown Heights from *Tahaluchah*⁴ on Shavuot one year, we were gathered in front of the library waiting for the rest of *Tahaluchah* to come back and for the Rebbe to come out. The Rebbetzin looked out for a moment from the front door of 770, once and then a second time. A few moments after the second time, the Rebbe came out. This was unusual; usually, the *mashbakim* would notify the Rebbe when the crowd was back so that he could come out. They were not there then, so it seems that the Rebbetzin came to check if the crowd was back. That Shavuot was the final *Tahaluchah* before 22 Shvat. I can't help but think that this was her checking out her children gathered together, for the last time *b'alma dein*.

On Shevii Shel Pesach after *Tahaluchah*, the Rebbe came out to greet the *chassidim* as they returned to 770 when, all of a sudden, for the first time ever at the end of *Tahaluchah*, the Rebbe started saying a *sichah*. None of the *chozrim* were there; we young *bachurim*

stood there trying to piece together the *sichah*. I was *baruch Hashem* able to remember a few lines of the *sichah* and take part in the *chazarah*, adding to the flow of what the Rebbe had said. Together with the rest of the *bachurim*, we were able to put together the whole *sichah*.

CHOF AV

It is always at this time of year that I feel a tremendous debt of gratitude to Harav Avraham Shemtov for taking us, the campers of Gan Yisrael Parksville, to the Rebbe for Chof Av, the *yahrzeit* of Reb Levik, the Rebbe's father. It was this day more than any other that we children got to be close with the Rebbe. The Rebbe made us feel like he was our dear father taking a strong interest in his children, by encouraging us to sing the camp songs and to *daven* with the camp spirit. Also at the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe paid special attention to the children from camp.

The Rebbe had *yahrzeit* for his father, yet, remarkably, he paid attention to us. The best summers were when Chof Av fell out on Shabbos, and we slept in Oholei Torah and got to spend the whole summer Shabbos in the Rebbe's *daled amos*. Even the *sichos* that the Rebbe spoke were said in a simpler language, which we could understand.

Maybe this sounds arrogant but we felt, we knew, and we

still know, that the Rebbe was speaking directly to us, and that he wanted us standing right next to him.

We observed and learned from every move and every word.

FARBRENGEN

Living in Crown Heights allowed us to attend the Rebbe's *farbrengens*, whether it was Shabbos or weekday. Our fathers took us with them. There was no rule; sometimes we sat with our fathers, sometimes we played outside, sometimes on the street, and other times in the courtyard. We tried to stay inside, listening to the Rebbe, looking at the Rebbe, for longer; the bribes and the dry *kichlach* that came in these huge paper bags helped, but when we were young (eight or nine years old, or younger), it only helped for so long. It was not always easy to stand and listen for hours, and sometimes we went to play outside after the first *sichah*. I'm not proud of it, but the truth must be told.

Very often, we would not sit next to our fathers; the long table where the Rebbe would *farbreng* had plenty of space underneath. We sat right by the Rebbe's feet, practically touching the chair the Rebbe was sitting on. We made sure not to touch it, but we were so close we could see the Rebbe's *gartel* hanging on the side of the chair, or how the Rebbe would arrange his *kapota* when he sat down. We could see every bend and crease in the Rebbe's shoes and feel every move the Rebbe made. It was terrifying to be so close when the Rebbe raised his voice to address an important issue.

While the Rebbe *farbrenged*, you could see the Rebbe's hands moving under the table, at times holding the tablecloth or, when saying a *maamar*, wrapping his holy hand with his handkerchief.

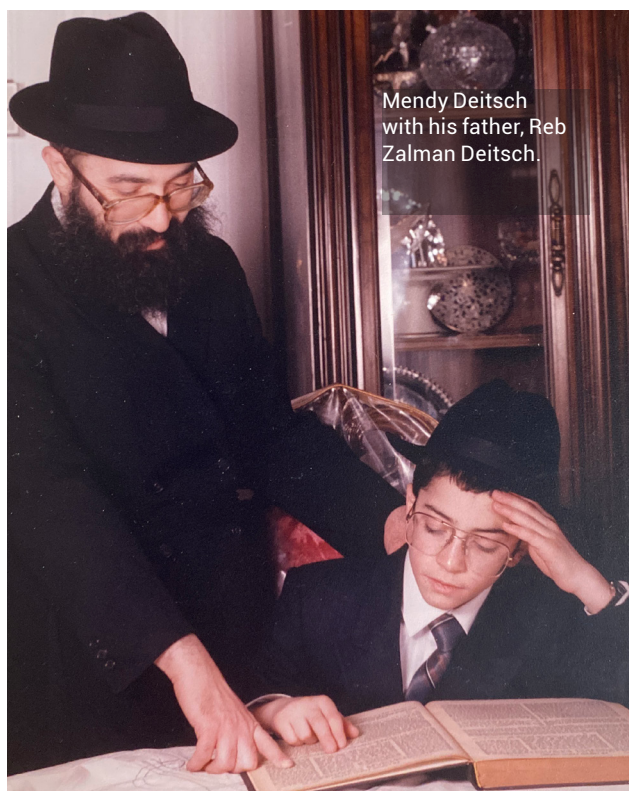
The *eltene chassidim* kept us in line, not to talk, not to block the Rashag (the Rebbe's brother-in-law, Rabbi Shmarya Gourarie) who sat right there, and to be respectful while sitting so close to the Rebbe. We knew the Rebbe insisted on us being respectful of the Rashag as well; one time some *bachurim* took away the Rashag's chair and they got strongly reprimanded by the Rebbe for the disrespect.

During the singing, the Rebbe often motioned to us to sing louder, with more *chayus*. There are videos and pictures of the weekday *farbrengens* where we are standing right next to the Rebbe; you can hear us singing as loudly as we could.

If it got hard to sit squeezed on the stage during the weekday *farbrengens*, we sometimes went down to the front of 770 and played *kugelach*. Remember, a weekday *farbrengen* started at 9:30 at night. For a ten-year-old kid, by 10:30 p.m., it can get hard to focus and concentrate on what the Rebbe is saying. We understood conversational Yiddish, but it was difficult (sometimes impossible) at such a young age to comprehend the *lomdishe pilpulim*. So, we would then go to the open area to play.

Kugelach can be played in silence, and the tiles in 770 are perfect for such a game; the *kugelach* slide nicely and make it easy to pick them all up in one sweep. Sometimes we were kicked out of where we were playing and made to go back to our seats. We cooperated right away because, ultimately, we knew that we belonged by the *farbrengen*, and we would often stop the game and go back to see the Rebbe and be next to him.

One Shabbos afternoon, while playing outside in the middle of a *farbrengen*, we were running up and down Eastern Parkway, and I ran into the street for some reason or another. As soon as I ran into the street, I heard screeching tires and WHAM I got hit by the speeding car and flew into the air, landing face



Mendy Deitsch
with his father, Reb
Zalman Deitsch.



Mendy Deitsch at his bar
mitzvah with his parents,
Reb Zalman and tbl"ch Mrs.
Cyrel Deitsch.



Photo: Mendel Meyers

Mendy Deitsch with his parents, Reb Zalman and tbl"ch Mrs. Cyrel Deitsch, at his wedding to Shternie Lipskier on 25 Elul 5756 (September 9, 1996).

down in the service lane on Eastern Parkway. Hatzalah was immediately called; there was blood everywhere. They attempted to put me in the ambulance to take me to the emergency room, but for some reason, I refused to go. Mrs. Roz Malamud (may she have a *refuah sheleimah*), my mother's friend who lives a few doors down from 770, came running from her house as she heard the commotion. When she saw that it was me, her friend's son, I was rushed into their house with her son, my friend Chesky Malamud, by my side. *Baruch Hashem*, I escaped with minor bruises and a few stitches. After that, the service lane was closed when *davening* or a *farbrengen* was taking place in 770.

MY BAR MITZVAH

I will conclude with my bar mitzvah story. My bar mitzvah fell out on Shabbos and, as is the *minhag*, a bar mitzvah *bachur* gets an *aliyah* either at *minchah*

Mendy Deitsch, age 18, receiving a dollar from the Rebbe's holy hand on Sunday, 24 Adar 5751 (March 10, 1991).



JEM photo #6928.

on Shabbos or Monday or Thursday. Because my bar mitzvah was on Shabbos itself, my *aliyah* by the Rebbe was scheduled for Shabbos, after the *farbrengen*. That year, the Rebbe had an infection in his foot, and it was extremely painful for the Rebbe to walk, so they set up the Rebbe's *shtender* right next to his chair on the stage where the Rebbe had just concluded the *farbrengen*. I was very excited and nervous; not only was I getting an *aliyah* by the Rebbe, but it was on stage in front of the whole 770 after the *farbrengen*.

Just as *minchah* began, someone came to my father and said that he had just come from out of town and could his son have my *aliyah*?

Without hesitation, my father said sure. I was shocked and devastated, but my father said it is worth it to do another Yid a favor, and especially on the day of your bar mitzvah it's appropriate to have extra *ahavas Yisroel*.

I received a weekday *aliyah* instead. Because of the Rebbe's foot, *kriah* was held in Gan Eden Hatachton, right outside the door of the Rebbe's holy room instead of in the big *zal*. Although it was an even smaller crowd than usual, just a

minyan, I had my bar mitzvah *aliyah* standing right there next to the Rebbe in the most private setting possible. My father was right; it pays to have *ahavas Yisroel*. It's true I did not have my *aliyah* the way I thought I wanted it, in front of everyone. It was a much better *aliyah* just the Rebbe, my father, a small group of *chassidim*, and me, 13 years old. ❧

NOTES

1. Read about Bubbe Maryasha in the recent Shvat issue of the *N'shei Chabad Newsletter* in the book review of *The Queen of Cleveland*.
2. Read about Reb Zalman Deitsch in the book, *A Chossid, a Businessman*.
3. We invite readers to challenge or improve this definition: An *Oholeitoranik* is a boy who goes to a school where no secular subjects are taught but *limudei kodesh* are taught—mostly in Yiddish—with massive *chayus* and *simchah*; the boys are made to feel kind of special and the side effect is a certain healthy *chutzpah* which, as they grow older, they use to do the Rebbe's *shlichus* most successfully.
4. *Tahaluchah*: Each Yom Tov the Rebbe sent his *chassidim* walking to other shuls (non-Chabad) all over the city to give over a *vort* of Chassidus and to share *simchas hachag* with our fellow Jews.