



# If you would meet the Rebbe today....

*This week, we mark thirty years since Gimmel Tammuz. It's time to say Thank You!*

## The Moment Before Conversion

Here is a story I recently heard about the Rebbe.

Rabbi Azriel Chaikin served as the Chabad emissary to Copenhagen, Denmark, during the 1960s. During a private audience, the Rebbe told him that his responsibility wasn't just towards the Jews of Copenhagen, but also to the Jews living in the surrounding villages and small towns.

One day, Rabbi Chaikin traveled to a small village near the town of Halden, on the Norwegian-Swedish border. He had heard about a Jewish family living there. It was late; he hesitated about knocking on their door at such an hour, but he decided he had no choice and knocked. To his surprise, he was warmly welcomed by the couple who lived there.

They had a very pleasant conversation around their table, and at some point, the wife got up and went to another room. After she left, the husband's face turned red with emotion. He leaned forward and whispered, "You have no idea what you just accomplished. With this visit, you stopped us from converting to Christianity."

He explained that they had moved to the village right after World War II and were the only Jews among many Christians. Everyone was kind to them, but being the only couple not attending church became a point of tension. The neighbors would say, "Judaism has no meaning for you anyway, so why not join us?"

Recently, a new pastor had come to the area, visiting homes in the small villages. He had visited them too, and a strong connection

formed. Since then, his wife had been voicing thoughts about converting. “We’ve lived here for decades,” she said, “and no Jew has ever come to check on us, while the pastor is so friendly.”

She began to pressure him, and he felt he had no valid reason to resist a step that would improve their relationships with the villagers. “And now, suddenly, you appear like an angel from heaven. Isn’t this a miracle?” the man asked.

Rabbi Chaikin continued to keep in touch with them, bringing them closer to Judaism. Eventually, he influenced them to move to a place with a Jewish community (From “Parsha,” *Parshas Korach*).

## **Just Say Thank You**

In an interview with a notable rabbi, Rabbi Yosef Kapach, who dedicated his life to translating and interpreting the works of the Rambam, the interviewer asked him what he would ask Rambam if he could meet him. Rabbi Kapach’s response left a lasting impression on me: “I wouldn’t ask him anything. I would just say one thing: ‘Thank you.’ Thank you for all the immense spiritual treasures you bestowed upon the Jewish people.”

This Tuesday is Gimmel Tammuz, commemorating thirty years since the Rebbe’s passing in 1994. When I reflect on my own feelings during this period, thirty years since we last saw the Rebbe, I likewise feel the urge to say just one thing: “Thank you.” Thank you for allowing us all the privilege of living in the Rebbe’s generation, being connected to him, and being influenced by him.

Often, we praise and speak highly of someone, but we forget to say “thank you.”

Mrs. Louise Hager from London had the privilege of knowing the Rebbe’s wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Her connection with the Rebbetzin began in the 1960s when her father fell gravely ill. The only treatment suggested by the doctors in Paris was a controversial new surgery. At the time, they had a connection to the Chabad rabbis in London, which led them to seek a private audience with the Rebbe.

Her parents spent a long time in the Rebbe’s room. When her father emerged, he said that the Rebbe had restored his faith in life and trust in God. In the end, he did not undergo the surgery and recovered miraculously.

Six months later, filled with gratitude for the Rebbe’s role in saving

him and, by extension, his family and all those around him, he felt compelled to travel to the United States to personally thank the Rebbe for what he had done.

After their visit, the Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Binyamin Klein, received a phone call from Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, asking him to convey a message to the Hagers. She expressed her strong desire to meet them the next time they came to New York.

It's important to understand that the Rebbetzin valued her privacy greatly; very few chassidim had ever seen her. For her to initiate a meeting with this family was highly unusual. When they returned to the U.S. and met with the Rebbetzin, she explained that she was curious to meet people who cared enough to travel all the way from England to the United States just to express their gratitude to the Rebbe.

She explained something very interesting. Often, after we go through tough times, all we want to do is forget about the unfortunate event. This often includes forgetting the kind people who helped us—because the memories themselves can often be very painful. This is why it was so important to her to meet a couple who did not forget to say thank you (Chabad.org).

## **The Complainers**

In this week's Torah portion, Parshas Korach, and in recent weeks in general, we have been reading about the complaints of the Jews in the desert. It began with their dissatisfaction with the manna; they were tired of eating "manna in the morning, manna in the evening" (Bamidbar 11:6, Rashi). Instead of being grateful for the daily miracle of bread from heaven, they complained.

In Parshas Shlach, G-d wanted to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey, but instead of accepting the gift with open arms, they complained that they didn't want to go—until their wish was granted and they were left for forty years in the desert.

Now, in this week's portion, they challenge Moshe, with Dasan and Aviram echoing their earlier complaint from Egypt, "Who made you a ruler and judge over us?" (Shemot 2:14), this time saying, "Why do you set yourselves above G-d's community?" (Korach 16:3).

Nowhere do we find anyone saying "thank you."

## **Let's Fix It**

The Rebbe often mentioned the teaching of the Arizal, which says that the generations before the coming of Moshiach are a reincarnation of the generation of the desert (Toras Menachem vol. 60 p. 123 and elsewhere).

If so, maybe it would be very worthy to rectify the lack of gratitude—by expressing thanks.

As we mark thirty years since the Rebbe's passing, how exactly should we express our gratitude?

The Rebbe once explained (12-13 Tammuz 5736) that when the Torah wants us to remember a miracle or event, it provides us the tools to do so. When the Torah wants us to remember the Exodus from Egypt, we hold a Seder. We point to the matzah and say, 'this is the bread of affliction our ancestors ate in Egypt.' By seeing and touching the matzah, it makes it easier for us to remember the Exodus.

The same is true about Shabbos. To remember that Shabbos is a day of rest, we light candles (one reason being that it enhances the pleasure of the Shabbos meal when sitting by candlelight), and we have two challahs—these are all “tools” to help us enter the atmosphere of Shabbos.

With the Rebbe's yahrzeit, especially the milestone of thirty years, we don't need reminders or physical devices to remember the Rebbe. Wherever you go, you find a Chabad House. At every turn, someone offers you the chance to put on tefillin. Indeed, since Gimmel Tammuz, the Rebbe has become more and more present in the Jewish world.

Anyone with even a minimal connection to Judaism will eventually encounter Chabad, and the essence of Chabad is the Rebbe; the shluchim and chassidim are like the Rebbe's hands and feet. So, it's not about remembering the past, but about something that lives and grows every day.

So how do we say thank you? The Rebbe taught us this as well. On Purim 1972, a few weeks before his seventieth birthday, the Rebbe addressed the crowd. He said that many people would definitely want to bring him gifts in honor of his birthday, so he gave very basic criteria: “In addition to charity and other good deeds, I ask that every person should also increase his Torah study.”

That's a criteria that doesn't need to change. Let's add some Torah study to our lives, and give a gift to the Rebbe.