



נדפס ע"י ולזכות  
הרה"ת ר' ברוך יהודה וזוגתו מרת איטא  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
גאנץ



# "לבנין עצדי עזד"

## THE REBBE'S PARTICIPATION AT THE WEDDINGS OF CHASSIDIM

**I**t didn't take long after the Rebbe's arrival on the shores of the United States in 5701\* and his work at the helm of the Lubavitch movement, that *bochurim and anash* gravitated towards him, many developing a close relationship with the Rebbe in those early years. As a result, Chassidim would share with the Rebbe their joyous moments as well as their personal anguish. This closeness only intensified once the Rebbe accepted the *nesius*. The father-like love the Rebbe showered upon his Chassidim knew no bounds. There is one area where this was uniquely expressed—the Rebbe's participation in the family *simchahs* of Chassidim.

Beginning in his early days in America, Chassidim would invite the Rebbe to join in their *tenaim* and weddings. The Rebbe participated as the son-in-law of the Rebbe, and later as the Rebbe. Before the Rebbe's *nesius*, he would usually be honored with reciting some of the *sheva brachos* under the *chupah*, occasionally being the *mesader kiddushin* as well. After assuming the *nesius*, the Rebbe continued to be *mesader kiddushin* at *chupahs* for over ten years.

In an earlier edition of *Derher*, we published a general overview of the Rebbe's practice of being *mesader kiddushin* (see *Derher*, Kislev 5773).

In connection with *Yud-Daled Kislev*, the date of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin's *chasunah*, we present the following article. This compilation is not intended to serve as a broader overview of this unique practice of the Rebbe, rather we intend to bring before the reader a more nuanced understanding of the Rebbe's involvement in the Chassidim's personal *simchahs*, by underlining various particular stories which offer us a window into the Rebbe's joining in *simchahs* and his involvement in every step of the way leading up to their weddings.

Most of the material for this article was culled from the *sefer* "*Mekadesh Yisroel*" by *Kehos*.

## EARLY YEARS

During the years prior to the Frierdiker Rebbe's *histalkus*, the Rebbe would often attend weddings of *anash* that took place in the greater New York City area. Usually, the Rebbe recited one of the *brachos* under the *chupah*, and in some cases he was *mesader kiddushin* as well. In various instances, the Rebbe also addressed the crowd during the *seudah*.

Though very uncommon today, in those days there would regularly be a ceremony held for the *tenaim* at the time of the couple's engagement. Generally, the Rebbe would not attend the *tenaim*, yet families who enjoyed a close relationship with *beis harav* would often insist for the Rebbe to attend.

In Elul of 5703\*, the *tenaim* ceremony of Rabbi Mordechai Altein, who was engaged to the daughter of Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, took place in a shul in East New York. Both the Rebbe and Rebbetzin participated. When the *mechutanim* began to write the *nusach* of the *tenaim*, the Rebbe commented that the *nusach* prepared is different from the *nusach* traditionally written by *beis harav*. Being that no one present had the *nusach* of *beis harav* handy, the Rebbe took a taxi to his home, returning with a *tenaim* document, which had in it handwritten notations from the Tzemach Tzedek.

A few months later, on 22 Kislev 5704\*, their wedding took place. This would be the first wedding in America at which the Rebbe addressed the crowd.

Following the wedding, a fascinating article was written by Rabbi Hodakov for one of the local Yiddish newspapers, in which he describes the events of the wedding, including the Rebbe's address. The article was edited by the Rebbe before being published.



THE REBBE SPEAKS AT A WEDDING ON 4 TAMMUZ, 5704\*

The article reads:

**“A Beautiful Chassidische Wedding in Brownsville.** On Sunday, 22 Kislev, the well-known Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson married off his daughter... Siddur kiddushin and sheva brachos were recited by the sons-in-law of the Lubavitcher Rebbe...

“A great impact was left on the crowd from the address delivered by Harav M. Schneerson, in which he expressed that through the very fact that the Jewish people serve one G-d and have one Torah, they are a unified nation, wherever they may be spread out [throughout the world]. A result of which, the joy of one Jew can uplift the mood of all other Jews.

“The Jewish people are distinct in their steadfast trust in Hashem,

to the point that even in the most bitter circumstances, we are sure of our ultimate victory. Yet, it is always necessary for Yidden to be dedicated to Yiddishkeit with mesiras nefesh; just like Matisyahu and his children, Yiddische children must be protected with their Yiddishkait... Just as the jug of oil was protected from the unclean Greek hands and therefore shone brightly...”

This address was later discovered in the Rebbe's Reshimos, where the Rebbe recorded brief notes of what he was going to say. Aside from this address, another ten addresses for weddings are recorded in the Reshimos, including instances where although the Rebbe had prepared an address, he did not end up delivering it. On these Reshimos the Rebbe noted

KEHOT PUBLICATION SOCIETY

## FOR WHAT DID YOU COME?

At the wedding of Elya Chaim Carlebach, the Rebbe was honored with the first two *brachos* at the *chupah*. Following the *chupah*, the Rebbe returned to the hall, where he had a conversation with Rabbi Eliezer Silver. When the dancing began the Rebbe commented to a few *bochurim* instructing them to join the dancing, saying, “For what purpose did you come? Was it in order to eat or to add in *simchas chosson v’kallah?*”

## TIME THE REBBE CHERISHED

The last wedding the Rebbe attended before the Frierdiker Rebbe’s *histalkus* was that of Reb Leibel Dubov, which took place only three days before Yud Shvat. Following the *chupah*, the *chosson’s* father, Reb Yitzchok Dubov, approached the Rebbe requesting that he remain at the wedding for the *seudah*.

The Rebbe replied by saying that each Thursday night, as well as *leil Shabbos* he learns with the Frierdiker Rebbe in private, concluding: “Never, will I give up this privilege!”

next to the title *לא נאמר*, indicating that it wasn’t delivered.

## PARTICIPATION AS REBBE

During the year of *aveilus* for the Frierdiker Rebbe, the Rebbe refrained



ADAR 5706\*. THE REBBE PARTICIPATES IN A TENOIM CELEBRATION. NOTE THE PICTURE OF THE FRIERDIKER REBBE.



THE REBBE SITS AT THE HEAD TABLE OF THE WEDDING SEUDA ON 23 ADAR II, 5706\*

from participating in any weddings. When the period of *aveilus* came to an end and the Rebbe accepted the *nesius*, the Rebbe’s responsibilities grew, leaving less time available to participate in all weddings of Chassidim. It was at this point that the Rebbe laid out specific conditions for his participation at weddings: The *chosson* must agree to grow a beard, and the *kallah* to wear a *sheitel* after the wedding.

The first wedding the Rebbe attended following the *histalkus* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, was that of Reb Leibel Posner, which took place just two weeks after the Rebbe accepted the *nesius*. As opposed to the weddings the Rebbe attended earlier, now it

was the ‘Lubavitcher Rebbe’ who was *mesader kiddushin*.

On his wedding day, Reb Leibel entered the Rebbe’s room requesting the Rebbe to participate in his wedding, explaining that he wished to honor the Rebbe with *siddur kiddushin*. The Rebbe responded that the honor of *siddur kiddushin* belongs to the *kallah’s* side<sup>1</sup>, to which Reb Leibel replied that he is indeed speaking on their behalf as well. The Rebbe agreed, and asked to be notified when they are ready to proceed with the *chupah*.

The Rebbe arrived at the hall during the *kabbalas ponim* and sat down near the *chosson* at the head of the table.

\*📅 5706-1946



AT THE WEDDING OF REB ZALMAN POSNER ON 6 KISLEV 5710, THE REBBE CAN BE SEEN CONVERSING WITH SOME OF THE ELDER CHASSIDIM.



AT THE SAME WEDDING, THE REBBETZINS SIT AT ONE TABLE. FROM RIGHT TO LEFT: REBBETZIN NECHAMA DINA, REBBETZIN CHANA AND REBBETZIN CHAYA MUSHKA.

A few days later, Rabbi Berel Baumgarten wrote a letter to a friend, in which he described what had transpired during the wedding:

“A week ago was Leibel Posner’s wedding, at which the Rebbe was present. When the Rebbe arrived, he sat near the chosson at the kabbalas ponim as usual and began speaking with the father of the kallah who is a shochet in New Jersey.

“At the beginning of their conversation, the Rebbe asked ‘Where will the chupah take place? Does the roof open or will it take place outside?’ The mechutan replied that the chupah is scheduled to be held indoors. It was evident that the Rebbe was troubled by this notion. ‘The chupah will be held inside?!’ asked the Rebbe. Instantly the father of the chosson along with his son, the chosson, readily agreed to have the chupah outdoors, yet the kallah’s father was hesitant, giving various reasons. The Rebbe replied by saying, ‘My wedding also took place during the winter, and yet the chupah was outdoors, under the sky—and baruch Hashem, I am happy with the shidduch.’

“When he continued to argue, the chosson motioned to his father-in-law,

asking him to end the discussion, which he then did. Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson then pointed out that at this point it is not possible to obtain a permit to perform the chupah on the street. The Rebbe motioned that not necessarily is it so...

“The father of the chosson got up and left to arrange the last-minute chupah arrangements, returning about five minutes later saying that everything is set up.

“The Rebbe went on to speak to the mechutan about his origins. He told the Rebbe he came from Germany, to which the Rebbe replied, ‘Germany gave us much Torah and much gedulah (wealth): Then he paused for a moment and continued with a sigh, ‘and much tzaros too... Torah had its effect in many places the world over: Babylon, Persia, Germany, France, Poland, Russia, and now America. Everything is now ready, what remains necessary is only the arrival of Moshiach...’

“The Rebbe then continued saying, ‘Since the histalkus of my father-in-law the [Friediker] Rebbe, I haven’t left the door of his home, aside from going home to rest and going to the Ohel. Now, the first time I am leaving 770 is to participate in your daughter’s

wedding, for a simchah. Being that joy transcends all boundaries, may Hashem see to it that this simchah shall bring us to transcend our present boundaries, including the ‘boundaries’ surrounding the Tziyun Hakadosh, the building of which was recently completed...”

“After the conversation, the chosson went to the badeken, while the Rebbe’s demeanor had become increasingly serious, similar to how it is when the Rebbe prepares to recite a maamar. The Rebbe instructed us to sing, while he went outside and waited near the chupah for the chosson and kallah to arrive.”

In his diary, Reb Yoel Kahan recorded: “When the singing had finished, the Rebbe said: ‘Chassidus teaches that a wedding symbolizes the Aibershter’s infinite greatness, which is revealed then... A niggun also has an infinite trait, for a niggun always repeats itself. The Rebbe then instructed that the niggun should be sung again.’”

Rabbi Baumgarten continued to describe the scene of the chupah: “The Rebbe was mesader kiddushin and also recited the sheva brachos. When the Rebbe recited the bracha שוש תשיש ותגל שוש תשיש ותגל his eyes filled with tears, while



he continued to recite it in his unique tone. Again, while reciting the words ישמע בערי יהודה ובחוצות ירושלים the Rebbe stopped for a moment, his tears preventing him from continuing.”

After the *chupah* the Rebbe returned to the hall and spoke again for a few minutes with the *kallah's* father, wishing him *mazal tov*. Soon after the Rebbe left the wedding, while the crowd sang *Ki B'simcha Seitzeiu* until the Rebbe's car was out of sight.

## A RARE EXCEPTION

A few months later, Rabbi Herschel Shusterman, the rav of the Lubavitcher shul in Chicago, suggested a *shidduch* for Dr. Avrohom Seligson. The Rebbe supported the idea and continued to be involved in every step of the *shidduch* from the engagement through the wedding.

Initially, the *kallah's* father, Reb Yitzchok Meir Pinsker, who was a disciple of the Chofetz Chaim, expressed hesitation at taking a *chosson* for his daughter who was a doctor. The Rebbe sent a message to him through Rabbi Shusterman that in the Litvishe circles Dr. Seligson would be considered a *gaon*. The engagement

was on Chof Cheshvan in Dr. Seligson's apartment. The Rebbe and Rebbetzin sent over their own serving utensils to be used at the *seudah*. The Rebbe suggested that Dr. Seligson sponsor the publication of the Rebbe Rashab's *maamar* לעד תר"פ סמוכים and the Rebbe personally composed the dedication, noting that the *chosson* was a doctor by including the words גומל חסד בגופו.

The Rebbe set the wedding date for the fifth night of Chanukah. In *yechidus* with the couple and their families, the Rebbe spoke with the *kallah's* father at length, praising the *chosson* in glowing terms. The *ufruf* was held in 770 on Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev and during the *farbrengen* the Rebbe spoke about the concept of marriage.

As mentioned earlier, at that point the Rebbe's *siddur kiddushin* was on condition that the *chosson* would grow his beard. At the time Dr. Seligson did not have a beard and the Rebbe asked Reb Shmuel Levitin whether it was halachically permissible for him to make an exception to this rule, for the Rebbe acted upon it more than three times which halachically gives it the stringency of an oath. Reb Shmuel immediately responded that the Rebbe's condition applied only to the students of Tomchei Temimim and Dr. Seligson was not a student at Tomchei Temimim. In addition, Reb Shmuel pointed out that since he was a relative of the Rebbe<sup>3</sup>, this was not an issue. The Rebbe was pleased with his response.

The wedding took place in Manhattan. The *kabbalas ponim* began with the Rebbe's arrival. The guests included venerable Chassidim, as well as prominent Litvishe rabbanim. The Rebbe sat next to the head of the table, and Chassidim sang *niggunim* while the Rebbe spoke to the *chosson* and reviewed the *kesubah*.

The Rebbe then said a *sicha*, explaining the connection between a wedding and Chanukah. At one point, the *chosson* started to pour a drink for the Rebbe. The Rebbe declined, saying that Chazal compared a *chosson* to a king and one must not be served by a king. Later, the Rebbe repeated this when the *chosson* took the elevator together with the Rebbe to the ground floor for the *chupah*. The Rebbe insisted that the *chosson* enter and exit first since he was compared to a king.

The *chupah* was set up indoors, under a retractable skylight. Before beginning the *chupah*, the Rebbe looked up to see if the skylight was indeed open, which it was, and then proceeded to start the *chupah*. The Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin* and recited all of the *sheva brachos*. The Rebbe offered the final *bracha* to the father of the *kallah*, who refused and requested that the Rebbe recite the final *bracha* as well. After the *chupah*, the Rebbe instructed the *bochurim* to begin dancing, during which the Rebbe spoke with a few people for about ten minutes, and then returned to 770.

After the wedding, the Rebbetzin borrowed the wedding album from Mrs. Seligson for a few days. It was implied that she wanted the album to show the Rebbe. Several years later Reb Moshe Groner collected all the photos of the Rebbe then available, most of which were from the Rebbe at weddings. He showed them to Rebbetzin Chana, who browsed through the photographs and commented on all of them. When she reached the photos of Dr. Seligson's wedding she told Reb Moshe, "For this wedding, the Rebbe made an exception of being *mesader kiddushin* although he did not have a beard."

## NEW CONDITIONS

The year was 5714\*. The number of responsibilities the Rebbe carried



THE REBBE PARTICIPATES IN THE KABBOLOS PONIM OF REB LEIBEL DUBOV ON 7 SHEVAT 5710\*, JUST THREE DAYS BEFORE THE HISTALKUS OF THE FRIERDIKER REBBE.



12 ELUL, 5708\*. WEDDING OF REB VELVEL SCHILDKRAUT

on his shoulders kept increasing day after day, and the trips to and from various halls around New York were becoming too time-consuming. The Rebbe's secretariat announced that from now on the Rebbe would only participate in *chupahs* that were held in the courtyard of 770.

Despite how busy he was, the Rebbe reserved a special father-like relationship showing boundless care and concern for the *bochurim*,

often being actively involved in their *shidduchim*. This was uniquely expressed with the story of Reb Berel Junik's *shidduch* and preparation for his wedding.

Reb Berel merited to serve as a *meshamesh bakodesh*, carrying out many tasks for Rebbetzin Chana, as well as for the Rebbe and Rebbetzin. Naturally, he maintained a very close relationship with *beis harav*.

When Reb Berel arrived in New York, he was already of marriageable age. During those years, the Rebbe would speak to him on numerous occasions on the topic of *shidduchim*. In his diary, the first mention of this was early on in 5711\*. The Rebbe mentioned to him that his parents had written a letter, asking the Rebbe to encourage their son Berel to begin looking for a *shidduch*.

Ultimately, it took another few years until he was ready to move forward, and then too, it was only with the Rebbe's urging. In his diary, Reb Berel recorded the Rebbe's consistent encouragement to him. The following are snippets from his diary. Reb Berel wrote:

***Yechidus. Tuesday, Erev Rosh Chodesh Iyar, 5713\*. 10:30-11:00 p.m.***

*The Rebbe: "Who must begin this conversation? Presumably, it must be me.*

*This is in continuation to what Rabbi Hodakov spoke with you, [regarding a shidduch proposal]. Let us speak undiplomatically. As opposed to being nervous of each other, better we fear Hashem...*

*"How do you intend to approach this? Through Rabbi Hodakov [who tried to set up a shidduch for me per the Rebbe's instructions] — No. Through someone else—Reb Itcheh Goldin—No. How exactly will you have the opportunity to meet someone? Do you want the Aibershter to present someone, and all you need to do is close your eyes and say 'Harei at mekudeshes'?*

*"Someone must suggest an idea, which is also with Hashem's help. Why do you seek to have it arranged miraculously? This is the way it's meant to be, you will speak over the phone and then you will meet. Obviously, the chupah isn't set up instantly, it will take time. Yet, the way you're sitting in your room, or in shul—how do you expect it will come to be?!*

“After you will date—whether this shidduch pleases you or not... Then, there is the other side as well. These details, if you won’t want to, you won’t need to share. If you have something you would like to clarify then [you may] ask.

“Why do I speak of this with you? Because I feel a responsibility to the bochurim who behave in a Torah manner... It is my responsibility to help them... Being that you don’t have another way to meet someone, I asked Rabbis Hodakov, Goldin, and others, to think of you...

“How will this happen? [Do you consider] to say nafshi chashka b’Torah, that you intend to spend another five years in yeshiva... I tend to think differently... (especially, since you already have some sort of income...)

“...Generally speaking, the frumme community is limited. To stop a girl in the street and talk to her or to enter Beis Yaakov and look for someone to meet, this is obviously not the way to do things...

[In response to a suggestion I had previously pushed off, the Rebbe said:] “Is this just an excuse, or is it actually so? I heard a few weeks ago she was supposed to be here, and she may be here again in a few weeks...”

“May Hashem help, it should go easy and soon, and you should think in these terms as well.”

**Monday, 23 Tammuz 5713\*, 11:00**

The Rebbe: “What is with regards to what we discussed? What kind of excuse did you prepare today?”

Berel Junik: “As of now, nothing.”

The Rebbe: “I see that things aren’t moving forward, we’re in the same place we were one, two, three, and four years ago. Through a middle man, as everyone else does—you don’t want. On your own, you won’t do it. Hashem does miracles, but it must be within the realm of nature.

“Do you expect to wake up and be standing under the chupah? ...Your parents are in Canada... In a few days I



KEHOT PUBLICATION SOCIETY



KEHOT PUBLICATION SOCIETY

TWO PICTURES FROM THE WEDDING OF REB LEIBEL POSNER ON 30 SHEVAT 5711\*, THE FIRST TO TAKE PLACE AFTER THE KABBOLOS HANESIYUS. IN THE FIRST, THE REBBE CAN BE SEEN CONVERSING WITH THE ELDER CHASSIDIM AT THE KABBOLOS PONIM. THE SECOND PICTURE WAS TAKEN DURING THE RECITATION OF THE SHEVA BRACHOS UNDER THE CHUPA.

will see, if you don’t begin to take action alone, I will write to your parents...”

**Wednesday, 5 Menachem Av, 5713\***

“...May Hashem grant you an appropriate shidduch, both materially as well as spiritually, this year. I don’t mean 5713\*, but rather this year since your birthday...”

During the year 5714\*, Reb Berel met his then-to-be wife. As things progressed, he went to inform the

Rebbe where things are holding. Reb Berel wrote:

**Friday, [Erev Shabbos Parshas] Shmini, 5714\***

The Rebbe: “How many times did you meet? About her [where she is holding], I will hear from her.

“Nu, mazal tov! It should be בשעה טובה ומוצלחת. May you have a Yiddishe and Chassidishe home. Would you like to enter [for yechidus] together or separately? Your father doesn’t know yet?”





28 KISLEV, 5712\*. WEDDING OF DR. SELIGSON.

*Is it a secret like everything? Call your father, better before Shabbos. You can call from the Merkos office. Why should you deny him this pleasure [to hear where things are holding]? Presumably, everything will go well.*

**Tuesday night, Parshas Tazria, 5714\***

*The Rebbe: "One needs to be joyful, as we are told בשמחה ב' עבדו את ה'. Moreover, joy must be visible on one's face. What must be before you will say 'it's good' Reb Ber? You already have a haskama and bracha, what else would you like?*

*"I think the 'Vort' should take place before Pesach... You should see to it that your parents should travel for the 'Vort,' or at least one of them. And when the mechutanim will be here, together they'll set a date for the wedding. The wedding should not be scheduled for a long time from now."*

**Tuesday, 4 Nissan 5714\***

*The Rebbe: "What date did they set for the wedding?"*

*Berel Junik: "After Shavuos."*

*Rebbe: "What date?"*

*Berel Junik: "The Rebbe suggested the Thursday after Shavuos."*

*...The Rebbe: "You said over a maamar? Which?"*

*Berel Junik: "Ad-nai Sefasai."*

*The Rebbe: "This is from 5712\*..."*

**Wednesday, 11 Nissan 5714**

*The Rebbe: "Regarding the mezonos [the Rebbe gave] - how did I tell you, with the words 'You should eat this at the chasunah?' ...If so, you should have eaten it by the Tenaim, but you should not sell the leftovers to a goy [for Pesach]. You may eat them now and it will be considered as [if you ate them] then. Take a piece for you and a piece for your kallah."*

**First day of Chol Hamoed Pesach, 5714\***

*...Berel Junik: "I would like for the Rebbe Shlita to be mesader kiddushin."*

*The Rebbe: "If I will travel to a hall I will later have many tzaros... the chupah can be done here and the seudah somewhere else, whichever way is more comfortable..."*

**Sunday, [Parshas] Nasso, 27 Iyar, 5714\***

*The Rebbe: "When do you plan to go to the Ohel? [It would be] best to go on the day of the wedding..." Turning to the kallah the Rebbe continued: "Most probably you will go to the Ohel as well."*

*You shouldn't go alone, go with your brother. If your mother wants to go too, she should go along with you.*

*"May [the wedding] be בשעה טובה ומוצלחת, may you build a Yiddishe and Chassidishe home, may you have nachas from Hashem and may Hashem have nachas from you.*

*"...On the day of the chupah, you should give tzedakah from money that you earned, not from other money such as gifts you received."*

**9 Sivan, 5714\***

*The Rebbe gave his siddur to the chosson and said: "When the crowd gathers or most of the crowd, you can notify me. I will be here at 8:00 or a little before 8:00. You should daven with a gartel!..."*

## PERSONAL ENCOURAGEMENT

The Rebbe's condition that the chosson must grow a beard was not limited only to the weddings the Rebbe attended, rather (perhaps mainly) it was also a means to encourage bochorim to grow their beards, which was not too common in those days.

In the summer of 5718\*, Reb Sholom Ber Raskin, then a bochor, entered the Rebbe's room for yechidus. During the yechidus, he mentioned to the Rebbe the name of a young woman who came up as a potential shidduch for him. The Rebbe replied saying, "[This is] a fine idea, she is a Chassidishe daughter...[the idea] pleases me."

The Rebbe then continued: "There is something I would like to request of you. It would be a fine idea if you were to let your beard grow. Your father had a beard, your grandfather had a beard... not because this is my will, rather for it is the will of Hashem." Reb Sholom Ber then asked if the Rebbe would be mesader kiddushin. The Rebbe replied, "If you will fulfill what

I requested of you, then I will fulfill what you are requesting of me.”

On a Friday afternoon some two weeks later, Reb Sholom Ber received a telephone call from Rabbi Hodakov who wanted to know if he had decided to fulfill what the Rebbe had spoken to him about in *yechidus*, concluding that if yes, he is to place a note on the Rebbe’s *shtender* before *Kabbalas Shabbos*.

A few weeks later, the Rebbe saw Reb Sholom Ber with his beard which had already started to fill in, and commented that “It would be a fine idea for you to visit the Ohel with the *tzelem Elokim*.”

A few months later his wedding took place, at which he merited the Rebbe’s *siddur kiddushin*.

## LATER YEARS

In the year 5720\*, it became increasingly clear that the Rebbe was gradually withdrawing from performing *siddur kiddushin* at weddings. At this point, the Rebbe laid out a new condition for the *siddur kiddushin*: The couple would need to undertake the commitment of going on *shlichus*.

Rabbi Avrohom Korf related:

“When I returned from *shlichus* in Eretz Yisroel in the summer of 5716\*,<sup>5</sup> I wrote to the Rebbe requesting that when the time comes, he should send me on *shlichus*.

“When the time of my wedding was approaching in the year 5720\*, the Rebbe had officially discontinued his custom of performing *siddur kiddushin* for *anash*. Nonetheless, when I requested the Rebbe to be *mesader kiddushin* at my *chupah* the Rebbe accepted.

“A few weeks later, someone who didn’t merit the Rebbe’s *siddur kiddushin*, asked the Rebbe something to the effect of ‘*lama nigara*’ pointing to our wedding where the Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin*. The Rebbe’s

response was that “The other *chosson* is going on *shlichus*.”

This would last for the next three years, while it was becoming increasingly rare for the Rebbe to participate in weddings. In the middle of 5722\*, the Rebbe offered Rabbi Sholom Posner of Pittsburgh that he would perform *siddur kiddushin* at the wedding of his daughter to Rabbi

Avrohom Sasonkin, which was to take place during the summer. Since the wedding was to take place in Pittsburgh, the Rebbe suggested the *chupah* be held in the early afternoon in the courtyard of 770, and the wedding reception would take place later in the evening in Pittsburgh.

This came as a surprise, for the Rebbe had seemingly already stopped

## IN PLACE OF PARENTS

Reb Tzvi Abba Lerman was a student in 770. When it came time for him to get married, his parents were not able to be present. Naturally, he wasn’t in the best state of mind as a result. Knowing this, the Rebbe paid particular interest that he should be aided in whatever he may need.

The Rebbe instructed him to go to Rabbi Hodakov and take a loan of \$500, in order to buy a diamond ring for the *kallah*. Later, the Rebbe confirmed that he had everything else he needed for the wedding. Shortly before the wedding the Rebbe instructed him to take another \$500 loan from Rabbi Hodakov, in order to buy a *sheitel* for the *kallah*.

At the *chupah*, which took place in the courtyard of 770, the Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin*.

Being that his parents were not present, the question arose as to who should fill their place to be the *shushvinin* who escort the *chosson* and *kallah* to the *chupah*. When the *chosson* proposed this question to the Rebbe, the Rebbe responded by asking, “Whom do you learn with?” The *chosson* replied that he learns under Rabbi Chaim Meir Bukiet. The Rebbe instructed that he should honor his teacher with *shushvinus*.



THE REBBE SPEAKS AT A KABBOLOS PONIM ON 26 KISLEV, 5714\*. THIS WAS ONE OF THE LAST TIMES THE REBBE WAS MESADER KIDDUSHIN AT A HALL.



2 KISLEV, 5714\*. THE REBBE EXITS THE WEDDING HALL AFTER THE CHUPA.



THE REBBE LOOKS ON AS THE KESUBA IS READ AT THE WEDDING OF REB BEREL JUNIK ON 9 SIVAN 5714\*.

THIS WAS THE ONLY PICTURE OF THE REBBE HANGING IN THE REBBE'S HOME. REB BEREL JUNIK SHOWED THE REBBETZIN THE PHOTOS FROM HIS WEDDING AND SHE REQUESTED A COPY OF THIS PICTURE.

performing *siddur kiddushin*. The Rebbe instructed that this remain an absolute secret, that none of the relatives should know of the Rebbe's participation beforehand. (So much so that at one point before the wedding Rabbi Groner asked a relative about it, and they were taken aback by the fact that even the Rebbe's secretaries weren't aware...)

The very last wedding at which the Rebbe performed *siddur kiddushin*, was that of Rabbi and Mrs. Shmuel Lew. At first, it seemed as though the Rebbe had already stopped performing *siddur kiddushin* altogether. Then, in a

fascinating chain of events, the Rebbe accepted their request. Rabbi Lew related:

"Towards the end of 5722\* I became engaged to the daughter of Reb Zalman Jaffe, of Manchester, England, who merited to have a special relationship with *beis harav*. Shortly thereafter, my father-in-law was discussing possible wedding dates with the Rebbe, suggesting that if the Rebbe would agree to be the *mesader kiddushin*, the wedding would take place in New York, during the summer of 5723\*. Alternatively, the wedding

was to take place in England, during the winter of 5723\*.

"The Rebbe responded that the date and location of the wedding are to be decided by the *mechutanim*. However, if they are to ask the Rebbe's opinion—'I don't see why not to wait until the summer, allowing the *chosson* the opportunity to finish his studies in yeshiva.' Regarding *siddur kiddushin*, the Rebbe emphasized that this tradition had already been discontinued.

"Being that the Rebbe was no longer performing *siddur kiddushin* at weddings, invitations began announcing *chupahs* taking place at locations other than 770.

"Once the location of our wedding was set for New York, my father-in-law said to the Rebbe that he is looking forward to the Rebbe's *siddur kiddushin*, as the wedding is being held in New York. The Rebbe remained silent and only smiled in response. It seemed clear to us as though the Rebbe was reluctant to accept *siddur kiddushin* since this tradition had officially stopped.

"Months went by and it was about ten days before my wedding. My *kallah* and I went into the Rebbe's room for *yechidus*. Among other things, the Rebbe asked if the *chupah* must necessarily begin at seven-thirty in the evening, as posted on the invitation, or perhaps can it be moved. I replied that if the Rebbe would like, it can be moved. The Rebbe then said to me, 'I'll speak it over with your *mechutan*.'

"That same night my father-in-law entered *yechidus* as well. The Rebbe asked him why doesn't he reschedule the *chupah* earlier, explaining that 'it's a pity on the *chosson* and *kallah* that they should need to fast for so long.' My father-in-law responded saying, 'If the Rebbe would accept the *siddur kiddushin* they are prepared to fast for two weeks!' The Rebbe responded, 'That is unnecessary,' and asked to

have the *chupah* rescheduled for five o'clock in the afternoon.

"Immediately after this conversation, we hastily printed and sent out corrected invitations with the updated time for the *chupah*. The Rebbe made it clear that the Rebbe's name should not be on the invitation, and obviously, there should be no mention of the Rebbe performing *siddur kiddushin*. The Rebbe himself edited the text of the invitation, underlining five o'clock *precisely* three times.

"It was a few days before the wedding when Rabbi Hodakov approached me and asked 'Who will be *mesader kiddushin*?' Clarifying, he wanted to know who is going to organize the *kesubah* and so on. He also asked if the *kallah* has two *sheitels*, for when one is being washed, the other can be worn. Another issue he mentioned was at what point will the *kallah* begin to wear her *sheitel*, implying that she should begin to wear it before the *chupah*.

"The Rebbe had instructed me to go to the Ohel on my wedding day. He also instructed me to learn from the *sefer Reishis Chochmah* in the days before the wedding.

"On the day of our wedding, the Rebbe went to the Ohel. At 3:30, my father-in-law wanted to begin the *kabbalas ponim*, in order to have the *chupah* begin precisely on time. It was now a quarter to five, and the Rebbe was yet to return. Rabbi Hodakov commented that it never occurred before that the Rebbe should return from the Ohel and not daven Mincha immediately. Hence, the *chupah* is presumed to be a bit delayed. My father-in-law insisted, 'The Rebbe said five, precisely five it will be!'

"We began the preparations for the *chupah* in front of 770. Five minutes ahead of five o'clock, the Rebbe's car pulled up, and the Rebbe went into his room, where he told Rabbi Hodakov

that he is going to the *chupah* before Mincha. Indeed, the *chupah* took place precisely at five! As usual, at a *chupah* in front of 770, Rabbi Kazarnovsky called out: 'Iz men *mechabed Kvod Kedushas Adoneinu Moreinu V'rabeinu mit siddur kiddushin*.'

"After the *chupah*, the Rebbe waited until we—the *chosson* and *kallah*—left the *chupah*, as was his custom. The Rebbe looked at us then with a very serious look.


"As a side note," concluded Rabbi Lew fondly, "throughout the *chupah* the sun was shining brightly. About three minutes after the *chupah* concluded, the rain began to come pouring down..."



In conclusion, we must not forget that even after the Rebbe ceased to perform *siddur kiddushin*, Chassidim always continued to invite the Rebbe to participate in their wedding. In return, the Rebbe would send back a letter with his *brachos* to the *chosson* and *kallah*, which is customarily read under the *chupah*. The Rebbe would also give his *siddur* to every *chosson* to daven with on the day of his wedding.<sup>6</sup>

Even in much later years, Chassidim would try to schedule their *chupah* for a time when the Rebbe would be in 770. According to some accounts, at times the Rebbe would stand near the window in his room to observe the *chupah* and answer "Amen" to the *brachos*.

At times, immediately after the *chupah*, the *chosson* and *kallah* had an opportunity to see the Rebbe for a brief moment. Either this was when the Rebbe was leaving 770 for his home, or if a *chalukah* was taking place downstairs in shul and the *chosson* and *kallah* would go by the Rebbe together.

Many recall this personal moment they merited to have with the Rebbe to be truly unique. With a broad smile the Rebbe would wish the couple "mazel tov." 

1. As is the Chabad custom.
2. Referring to the structure built for the Ohel of the Frierdiker Rebbe.
3. He was a descendant of Reb Chaim Avraham, son of the Alter Rebbe.
4. The custom among Chassidim is to begin wearing a gartel at Mincha before the wedding, when davening with the Rebbe's *siddur*.
5. See Derher Sivan 5774.
6. See Derher, Adar 5776.



THE REBBE WISHES MAZEL TOV TO A CHOSSON KALLA WHO CAME DOWNSTAIRS TO RECEIVE A KUNTRES FROM THE REBBE RIGHT AFTER THEIR CHUPPA ON THE EVE OF EREV ROSH HASHANA 5750\*.