



BEHIND THE PICTURE

By: Dovid Zaklikowski

**Photos: The Shafran Collection/
Lubavitch Archives**

On a balmy afternoon in 5746, a large group of chassidim gathered outside 770. Word had spread that the Rebbe ^{ע"ה} would be using a new stretch Cadillac that had recently been purchased.

The Rebbe would soon be leaving to the Ohel, approximately a half hour's drive from 770.

In the back of their minds, many of the bystanders knew they shouldn't be there; the Rebbe would certainly rather they be learning in Seder Hayeshivah. Some, in fact, realized their mistake and

left, but there still remained a sizable crowd when the Rebbe walked out.

In the first picture the Rebbe distributes coins to the children, as was regular routine when leaving to the Ohel, and a large crowd of onlookers watch in the background.

They were singing *Didan Notzach*, and the Rebbe had encouraged the singing as he walked out the main door of 770.

The Rebbe could have used a new car. The seats in the old car, a 1977 model, were rubbed out, and the increased legroom – as well as some other amenities – in the new car would certainly make for

a more comfortable ride.

A group of the Rebbe's aides had worked on purchasing a suitable car. The Rebbetzin was also involved in choosing the car, and had herself selected the seats' fabric. The Rebbe was aware that a new car was needed and that one was being purchased.

The Rebbe's first ride in the car was supposed to be a quiet event; no one had anticipated a crowd to gather. In fact, the car was supposed to have been brought discreetly to the Rebbe's home that morning, from where the Rebbe would be driven to 770. This would have prevented a spectacle at the car's "inaugural ride," however, due to technical reasons,



the car was not ready for delivery until later that morning.

As the Rebbe exited 770, he noticed the larger than usual crowd. Reaching the curb, the Rebbe turned to Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky and asked, “Where is the car that we used yesterday?”

The second picture depicts the Rebbe as he requests from Rabbi Krinsky that he would like to use the old car.

The old car was now quickly sought. The third picture portrays the Rebbe waiting for the car to arrive.

“Is this the car?” the Rebbe asked when the car finally pulled up. Rabbi Krinsky nodded, and the Rebbe entered the car and was driven to the Ohel.

The entire episode lasted no more than a few minutes, but the Rebbe had ensured that only the old car was used from then on.

Rabbi Krinsky relates, “After the Rebbeztzin’s Histalkus, the Rebbe requested that the new car be given to one of the aides who assisted her in the home, so he should have a means for *parnosah*.”

Why Not a New Car?

After this event, people felt they had now a new way to illustrate the concept of *iskafya*. Was a new car an absolute necessity? Of course not!

Sometimes You Don’t Need *Iskafya*...
The Rebbe, however, maintained oth-

erwise.

Two months later, during a *farbren-gen*, the Rebbe discussed the topic of *iskafya*—in fact, he spoke of *iskafya* in reference to the purchase of a new car.

“At times,” the Rebbe explained (freely translated and paraphrased here), “we desire a new car, with the rationale that the newer vehicle will help us arrive faster to our destinations—in our pursuit of doing good things!”

“However, we shouldn’t use *Hashem* and *Kedusha* to justify personal desires. Despite the supposedly lofty intentions, not purchasing a new car would constitute *iskafya*.”

“There are those that purchased a new car,” the Rebbe continued, alluding to the events of a few weeks beforehand, “and they explain the need for a new car; the seats [in the old one] are rubbed out, etc.”

However, the Rebbe explained, to him a new car or an old one made no difference. “I have no idea of the difference! I know that [the old] car was the agent for a lot of good missions in the past, and it could continue doing so in the future...” The concept of *iskafya*, therefore, does not apply here.

By way of analogy, the Rebbe explained that if someone likes red potatoes and someone brings him white po-

tatoes—if he doesn’t eat it, no one will claim that he is doing *iskafya*.

“*Iskafya* is when you know that the amount of *Tzedokah* you are giving is a lot less than you could give, and you do not want to give any more, but you give anyway...”

Why?

So it wasn’t about *iskafya*. So why indeed did the Rebbe refuse the new car?

No one ever asked the Rebbe this question, so all answers are merely speculation.

Maybe it was the large crowd waiting on the Rebbe’s reaction, and the Rebbe didn’t want a spectacle?

The answer we will never know, however, we did learn an important lesson about the meaning of *iskafya*.

Let’s take it to heart.

The photos are dedicated in memory of Rabbi Bentzion Shafran, of blessed memory.

Rabbi Shafran was a true soldier in the Rebbe’s army and dedicated his life to assisting Jewish soldiers and prisoners.

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