



א ציור פון א חסיד

”רבי; האק מיר אפ דעם לינקן זייט!” Reb Yikusiel Liepler

Reb Yikusiel Liepler stands out among the great personalities in the annals of Chassidic history. He figures in many popular stories and is mentioned not once, but twice in Hayom Yom – a distinction shared by only one other Chossid (all the rest are Rabbeim or Talmidei Hamagid).

An elder Chossid from the first generation of Chassidim, Reb Yikusiel lived to see four Chabad Rabbeim, living more than one hundred years.

Reb Yikusiel was a young man living in Liepli. He was around twenty-five years of age when he first heard of the Alter Rebbe, and, inflamed with passion, he rushed to Liozna to see him.

“...He climbed up the wall and jumped through the Alter Rebbe’s window, crying bitterly...”

Arriving there, he looked to go into Yechidus by the Alter Rebbe. However, the elder Chassidim tried to explain to him the extent of preparation a Chossid does before he is ready to go into his Rebbe, especially for the first time: some Chassidim would prepare for years before Yechidus! And for example, Reb Moshe Vilenker prepared for three years before his first Yechidus¹.

But Reb Yikusiel wouldn’t hear of it, and demanded to be allowed to see the Alter Rebbe. When he realized that his arguments were not heeded, he climbed up the wall and jumped through the Alter Rebbe’s upper window crying bitterly, “Rebbe, chop off my left side where my Yetzer Hora is.”

The Alter Rebbe responded to his cry, “Master of the universe, it is written that you give life to all,” and Reb Yikusiel left the room full of joy. The Alter Rebbe gave him a chayus but this was *‘Makifdike’*.

Chassidim have a saying, “A Chossid’s service of Hashem follows his first Yechidus, and his first Yechidus is according to his essence. According to one’s essence, the Rebbe prescribes an appropriate Avodah.”

This first Yechidus of Reb Yikusiel was indeed a *‘Makifdike’* one. He jumped and shouted his needs and so the Alter Rebbe answered in a *‘Makifdike’* way.

This set the trend in the Avodah of Reb Yikusiel. For his entire life, he was a

pressed and would rapidly daven from his siddur pointing with his finger to every word.

When the Chossid “came back,” he would dance and daven with a fiery excitement. There were times in his “Chossid in” periods where he would daven Shacharis, Mincha, and Maariv one after the other, without a break³. Some days he wouldn’t eat, commenting that since the Rebbe gave him a Brocha to live a long life, he should be able to live and be healthy without food. Such is the seder of a *‘Makifdike’* Chossid.

Another story where we see his unique *‘Makifdike’* seder:

Reb Yekusiel would sometimes have an outbreak of his ‘Chossid’, and no matter where he would find himself he would burst out into a joyous dance and remark in Russian: “Chossid *Prishal* – the Chossid came!” Or “We must make a dance, we must make a dance,” and would then force any bystanders to dance along with him.

Once, Reb Shmuel Ber Borisover⁴ related that “Reb Yikusiel came to Borisov and stopped in the post office to mail off something. Suddenly he experienced a revelation of his “Chossid” and he went off to dance with the postmaster⁵.

After his Yechidus with the Alter Rebbe, Reb Yikusiel returned to Liepli where he opened a shop to sell salt.

This continued for fifteen years, until something happened that turned Reb Yikusiel’s world upside down.

As it is known, the Mittler Rebbe explained Chassidus in greater depth than his father had, and also demanded of his Chassidim to Chazzer Maamorim as they traveled back from Lubavitch to their home towns.

And so, one day a young Chossid, one of the Mashpiyim the Mittler Rebbe had established, arrived in the city of Liepli. During his week stay, he reviewed a Maamor each day by heart. These Maamorim were very profound and deep, and proved difficult to convey. However, this Chossid was a talented and smart individual with an eloquent manner of speech; each phrase he spoke was clear and precise, and deeply affected his listeners.

Now, although Reb Yikusiel was a Baal Avodah and would daven for many hours, his knowledge of Torah in general, and Chassidus in particular was very limited.

Try as he might he could not grasp the Maamorim. This bothered him immensely; he became depressed and would berate himself, calling himself names.

Reb Shmuel Ber Borisover later recounted Reb Yikusiel's own words describing that turbulent time.

"Imagine," he said, "I was forty years old at the time, having traveled to the Rebbe for

over fifteen years⁶ and studied to the best of my abilities. Suddenly, a young man, a hatchling really, comes and repeats Maamorim from the Rebbe⁷ with such eloquence, and I hear it all but cannot understand a word! I feel the topics are incredibly deep, wondrous things, but I have no clue.

"Every day I would hear Chazzara from the Chossid, hear but not understand. My flesh had goosebumps, each Maamor crushed me like mortar in a pestle. I called myself many names. A fire burned within me to understand the Maamorim.

"I asked the young Chossid to repeat the Maamor again and again – he even attempted to explain it to me on a personal level – yet my head was like wood and my mind was stuffed; nothing entered.

"For three weeks I kept him in my house. I dropped my family and store and spent day and night trying to unravel the Maamorim. Unfortunately I couldn't understand a word, the Chossid left and I was left alone like a rudderless ship stranded in the middle of the ocean. I fasted and cried over my Teshuvim, but nothing helped, so, with little options left, I set out for Lubavitch.

"When I arrived in Lubavitch, I encountered a different world from when I had last been there a month prior.

"Five or six Minyanin of Yungerleit study Chassidus for hours on end, day and night. I arrived on a Wednesday. The first Maamor was before Kabbolas Shabbos and on Shabbos day a Biur⁸ was given before Mincha.

"I understood the Maamor and even chazzered some of it Baal Peh. But the Biur was beyond my scope, and I was surprised to see that the younger Chevrah had understood it.

"On Monday I entered into Yechidus and poured out my heart, telling over everything up until the past Shabbos."

"The Rebbe answered me: Nothing stands in the way of the will. He went on to explain that since Rotzon is part of the Nefesh, it could force the Nefesh to change.

"Once I heard that everything hinges on my will, I decided to stay in Lubavitch until I would begin to understand.

"I sent a message home with some travelers to take care of the store until I returned.

"For four months I worked in training myself to think about one topic for many hours straight. And I sweated many more hours in training myself to re-think one topic tens of times.

"Much of my progress I owe to Efrayim of Semilyan; he would tirelessly review the Maamorim with me, over and over until I could follow their depth. I had two favorite places where I would like to think: the cellar under the large Shul or on a beam under the roof of the Shul.

"That Tishrei I felt like a new man."

How much of a change did he actually succeed in making?

It is known that the Mittler Rebbe wrote different Sforim for different groups of Chassidim.

Aside for the general split of Oivdim and Maskilim, there were many smaller groups within the two broader categories..

Imrei Binah – the most advanced of his Sforim – he wrote for Reb Yikusiel Lepler.

(To be continued...)



1. In general it is very interesting to note that both the Friediker Rebbe and Rebbe compare Reb Yikusiel and Reb Moshe Vilenker.

2. True, they were B'nimiyus but the Koichos were Makifim.

3. Brought in Hayom Yom 3 Kislev.

4. See Links in the Chassidic Legacy.

5. Sefer HaSichos 5704 page – 9, and Reshimas Hayuman page 307.

6. Alter Rebbe.

7. Mittler Rebbe.

8. A Maamor of explanation, for the Friday night Maamor.