



# The Rebbe, the Key and the Photographer

**By:** Dovid Zaklikowski  
**Pictures:** The Kahn Family/  
Lubavitch Archives

Mr. Irving I. Stone, of blessed memory, was the eldest son of Jacob Sapirstein, who sold postcards in the early 1900's from a horse-drawn wagon in Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Stone, who did odd jobs for his father from his early childhood, soon realized that instead of selling cards others created, it was time for him to create cards to sell. Thus was born the largest greeting card company in the world: American Greetings.

Yet, Mr. Stone was a humble person, lived simply, and taught his children to live a meaningful life. "He never thought very much of himself," says his daughter Henshe Gansbourg. "He never dressed in an extravagant way; he never wanted to live in an extravagant way."

The Rebbe זצ"ל was deeply impressed by him; chairman of a multi-billion dollar business, and yet one who cares deeply for Jewish continuity and Jewish life.

"From what I have heard of you and know you," the Rebbe wrote to him in a letter from Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av 5733, "you are more concerned with persons and values than with hard business, and this is what we are concerned here with – living persons and the eternal values of *Toras Chaim* and *Toras Emes*, which must be brought together, in order to save them and their future generations."

## A CONVENTION SPURS CHABAD HOUSE

Rabbi Zalman o.b.m. and Rebbetzen Shula Kazen, at the time, were living on Shlichus in Cleveland for over fifteen years. The Rebbe had suggested several times to Rebbetzen Kazen that she organize a N'shei Chabad Convention.

Thus a convention took place in 5730, with the concluding banquet for both men and women, which Mr. Stone attended. The result of the convention was that a Chabad house was needed, and that Rabbi Leibel and Mrs. Devorah Alevesky (the Kazen's daughter) were to "prepare the landscape." Thus they began visiting the city several times a month to do programs.

At the time, Rabbi Alevsky was a Shliach in Tzach, the Lubavitch Youth Organization, in New York, where he headed several programs and had several Shluchim working under him. Although he never planned on moving to Cleveland, he was happy to assist his in-laws with their new initiative.

During one summer when the couple was in Cleveland, Rabbi Alevsky held a "Stump the Rabbi" program every Tuesday night at the Hillel House. The program met great success, and the general community was surprised to hear that college students, who had little interest in general Jewish life, were spending hours with a bearded Rabbi.

Having heard about the Tuesday evenings and other Chabad activities, Mr. Stone decided to participate and "see with his own

eyes" what it was all about.

After a few visits he was convinced of Chabad's revolutionary and pioneering activities, and he told Rabbi Alevsky that he would sponsor the coming programs.

Rabbi Alevsky replied that he and his wife already had their Shlichus in Tzach, and while they would be happy to help find another couple, they couldn't leave New York.

However, Mr. Stone wasn't to be persuaded.

"I saw you in action and want you to come," he stated, "Listen, I am a businessman and I want to make an investment with dividends. I want you to come."

The conversation continued in this vein until Mr. Stone suggested that Rabbi Alevsky write the Rebbe, a suggestion he took up.

The Rebbe soon responded to him that any decision on his part would have to be discussed with the *Hanhalah* of Tzach.

After much negotiation, an agreement was reached where Rabbi Alevsky would travel to New York for several days a month, and, whenever needed, he would be on the next plane to New York.

The Rebbe received the agreement and gave his approval on two conditions; the budget be guaranteed by the local Jewish community, and a building be purchased for the Chabad House.

On his part, Mr. Stone arranged the budget for the first three years, and Rebbetzen Kazen with the help of Mr. Mel Wax-



## are you a searching jew?

if you are a jew and you are searching for a jew who is not a jew, then you are a searching jew. if you are a jew and you are not searching for a jew, then you are not a searching jew. if you are a jew and you are searching for a jew who is not a jew, then you are a searching jew. if you are a jew and you are not searching for a jew, then you are not a searching jew.

then... drop in at one of our Rap 5s

or participate in a total shabbat

are you a searching jew?



man purchased a spacious house for Chabad.

The couple moved to Cleveland in 5732, and in 5733, Mr. Stone also arranged a color flier to advertise the Chabad House. "Are You a Searching Jew?" asked the flier, which featured a silhouette of dancing rabbis, "then... drop in at one of our Rap Sessions... or participate in a total Shabbat experience."

That summer, shortly after purchasing the property, Mr. Stone and Rabbi Alevsky travelled to New York for Yechidus and to present the key to the Chabad House and the flier to the Rebbe. Mr. Stone had Yechidus and then asked the Rebbe if he can call in a photographer to take pictures of him presenting the key.

The Rebbe responded "Normally I don't do this, but for you Mr. Stone I will make an exception, and you will make Cleveland a pilot project."

The Rebbe then posed for the camera while accepting the key to the Chabad House, and with the color flier visible on the table.

(When the photographer entered the Rebbe asked him if he had put on Tefilen that day. He responded that he had not done so that day. Sensing that the Rebbe was bothered by this, Rabbi Alevsky asked him if he will put on tomorrow, and he said he would. The Rebbe was pleased with the response.)

After the Yechidus, Mr. Stone said he was "more impressed [by the Rebbe] than by anyone else he ever met."

#### A LESSON IN LISTENING

"As agreed upon," says Rabbi Alevsky, "I continued to visit Crown Heights for several days every two weeks to assist in the work of Tzach."

Yet, because of the great success of the Chabad programs, Mr. Stone and Mr. Waxman continued complaining about his being away from Cleveland every two weeks, "they wanted me to spend all of my time in Cleveland."

And while Mr. Stone did not divulge his Yechidus or correspondence with anyone, he confessed to Rabbi Alevsky that he had discussed with the Rebbe about him being full time to Cleveland, without having to travel to New York anymore.

So when shortly afterwards Rabbi Alevsky was in Yechidus, he wrote to the Rebbe asking what he had told to Mr. Stone about his continuing coming to New York. In response, the Rebbe said, "Mr. Stone did want it very much and continued talking about it, and I let him finish what he wanted to say. Why do I need to interrupt a person who wanted it so much..."

"But when he finished talking," the Rebbe said, "I repeated my position," that Rabbi Alevsky should continue to come to New York.

And so he continued to come to New York, until it was agreed that Tzach could run smoothly without me.

#### WHEN TIME FLIES BY

To conclude I would like to highlight a letter Mr. Stone received from the Rebbe





that has a positive message for all of us. The letter is dated the 13th of Cheshvan, 5734 (the paragraph marks are mine):

*In normal times, steady, albeit slow, progress might be satisfactory, and sometimes steady progress and speed may not even be compatible. However, we live in "abnormal" times, when things move with whirlwind speed, and we must not lag behind the times in our method of tackling problems in the vital area of Torah and Chinuch.*

*Indeed, in light of the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that a person must learn from everything around him how better to fulfill his purpose in life, especially in fundamental matters, the present jet age and supersonic speed should inspire the idea of time-saving in the spiritual realm.*

*A distance that not so very long ago took days and weeks to cover, can now be spanned in a matter of hours, and a message that took as long to communicate*

*can now be transmitted instantly.*

*If this could be accomplished in the physical and material world, surely the same should be true in the spiritual realm, whether in the area of personal achievement, or in the area of affecting a change in the environment.*

*To be satisfied with less in the realm of the spirit would be like arguing to return to the era of the horse and buggy on the ground that this was satisfactory in olden days, all the more so since spiritual matters have never been subject to the limitations of time and space...*

So as life flies by, let us not forget to move our spiritual matters and good deeds at a comparable rate.

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# Rambam

שיעורי  
מורה

פרק אחד ליום	שלושה פרקים ליום	
סדר תפילות... נהגו העם... חוקים תמיד ימלוך עלינו וכו'	ספר הפלאה. הל' שבועות פרקים א-ג	כ"ה סיון
נוסח ברכות התפילה... וברכה אחת באמצע	פרקים ד-ו	כ"ו סיון
וזוהו נוסח כל הברכות האמצעיות... שוב אינו צריך	פרקים ז-ט	כ"ז סיון
נוסח הוי"ו... שוש אשיש בה' נגמר ספר שני כו'	פרקים י-יב	כ"ח סיון
ספר זמנים. הל' שבת פרק א	הל' גדרים פרקים א-ג	כ"ט סיון
פרק ב	פרקים ד-ו	ל' סיון
פרק ג	פרקים ז-ט	א' תמוז