

# א ציור פון א חסיד

## Reb Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky

**‘Young age is not measured according to the passport’  
- to its fullest extent**

**I**n 5657, in the city of Mogilov, Russia a young boy was born to Reb Moshe and Shifra Kazarnovsky. This child, later to become the famed Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky was born into a prestigious family stemming from the daughter of the Mittlerer Rebbe, Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel.

After his Bar Mitzva, young Shlomo Aharon was sent to study in Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim in Lubavitch, where he remained throughout his yeshiva years. These seven years from 5671 through 5677 were wonderful years for Shlomo Aharon. Recalling the atmosphere of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur with the Rebbe Rashab he said, “It was a different world, a spiritual world that was completely removed from this physical one.” His studies in the yeshiva made a deep impression on him, forming his personality and molding him into the true chossid and dedicated soldier of the Rebbe’im that he remained for the rest of his life.

When Reb Shlomo Aharon was of marriageable age, the daughter of one of the distinguished Chassidim was suggested as a prospective shidduch. Chaya Freida Grossman had lost her father, the Chossid Reb Osher Grossman, known as Reb Osher of Nikolayev, who was among the *eltère* chassidim of the Rebbe Rashab.

Ready to go ahead with the *shidduch*, they asked for the Friediker Rebbe’s consent and blessing. This was during the first years of the Friediker Rebbe’s *nesius* when he refrained from answering questions and giving brochos for shidduchim and similar matters. So it was no surprise when the Friediker Rebbe responded that there was no reason to consult him in this matter.

Reb Shlomo Aharon visited the Ohel of the Rebbe Rashab and requested that the Rebbe should relay his answer through his son, the Friediker Rebbe. When Reb Shlomo Aharon returned to the Friediker Rebbe, he was told that the Rebbe Rashab consented. The Friediker Rebbe then pointed to the shelf where there was a *nadan* (dowry), money prepared for the choson Reb Shlomo Aharon by his late





Reb Yisroel Jacobson

father-in-law, Reb Osher.

The years after their wedding were tough times for the Lubavitcher Chassidim. The Czar had been overthrown and Communism began to spread its dark cloak over Russia.

In the 5680's, Reb Shlomo Aharon's brother who was already in the United States, sent a visa to him so that he could enter the U.S. This put him into a difficult dilemma. On one hand, the Frierdiker Rebbe was encouraging Chassidim to remain in Russia for the purpose of spreading Torah and Yiddishkeit with self-sacrifice. On the other hand, he was scared for the spiritual future of his three-year old daughter and his one-year-old son in such dangerous times?

He consulted the Frierdiker Rebbe and the Rebbe instructed him to leave Russia and travel to the United States.

#### **"WE WILL SEE EACH OTHER"**

Reb Shlomo Aharon prepared quickly for the trip. Despite the fact that he was going to be free from the communist noose, he was deeply upset, not wanting to part from the Rebbe and all his friends in the center of Chassidus in Russia and wander in the foreign and spiritually desolate land of America.

Prior to his departure in 5686, he entered into Yechidus with the Frierdiker Rebbe. The Frierdiker Rebbe calmed him and said, "We will see each other in the near future, with Hashem's help." Reb Shlomo Aharon thought to himself, "Where will we meet?" The Frierdiker Rebbe responded, "There". Reb Shlomo Aharon almost jumped from joy. He understood that the Frierdiker Rebbe was hinting to him that he would be coming to the United States. Reb Shlomo Aharon left

the Yechidus joyously.

When Reb Shlomo Aharon came to the United States, he settled in Dorchester, New York, where his brother had prepared an apartment for him. After a few months, he became the Rav in the 'Ayin Yaakov' Shul and began spreading Yiddishkeit and Chassidus among the congregants.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe was arrested in Sivan 5687, although Reb Shlomo Aharon had been in the United States for only a short period of time, he was among the primary activists who worked to free him from prison. He visited American Senators and Congressmen, petitioning them to act on behalf of the Frierdiker Rebbe.

Reb Shlomo Aharon described his activities in a letter to his friend Reb Yisroel Jacobson:

"When I learned that the Rebbe was arrested, I found no peace for myself. Today I met Congressman Jacobstein who is a peer of Senator Boro and with the New York Senators Kaplan and Wagner. They are very respected by the Soviets and a telegram was [also] sent in the name of the shul members to do everything possible to free the Rebbe. In addition, a telegram and

a letter were sent to the Joint and our hope is that our efforts will be rewarded."

On the twelfth of Tammuz, the Frierdiker Rebbe was released. The very next day, on the 13th of Tammuz, Reb Shlomo Aharon was informed by his friend Rabbi Jacobson who had been notified by the Joint Distribution Committee, the news regarding the Rebbe's release. However this news was still highly confidential.

#### **HELPING WITH COMMUNAL MATTERS**

Agudas Chassidei Chabad, founded in 5684, had already been established in the United States. However, there was a need for someone to conduct the activities. Reb Shlomo Aharon became involved and one of his primary functions was to contact and strengthen the descendants of Anash, in order that they do not forget their Chassidic ancestry.

The ability to earn a living in Dorchester was limited and Reb Shlomo Aharon relocated to Benson-Hurst, Brooklyn, where he was appointed as the Rav of two shuls.

His many activities, in addition to serving as the Rav in two shuls, did not interfere with Reb Shlomo Aharon's life as a chossid. His home was open to chassidim and when the chossid Reb Yitzchok Gurwitz "Reb Itche der Masmid" visited the

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United States, the Farbrengens took place in Reb Shlomo Aharon's home. Rabbi Berel Haskind and Rabbi Shmuel Zalmanov stayed in his home when they came to the United States, until they found their own apartments.

He placed special emphasis on the Frierdiker Rebbe's directive to give public shiurim. In addition to his shiurim of Chumash and Rashi, Ayin Yaakov and Medrash, Reb Shlomo Aharon gave a steady Tanya shiur.

On Shabbos, Reb Shlomo Aharon's schedule was full. He would awaken early and go to the Mikva, a thirty minute walk each way. After returning home, he would study Chassidus for an hour-and-a-half. He would visit his first shul for Shacharis and afterwards walk to his second shul for Musaf.

At his Shabbos table, only Torah and inspiring words were heard. Anyone attempting to mention a negative word about someone else was met without success. A family member recalled, "My father never allowed anyone to say something negative about another, and especially about other chassidim". His Shabbos table turned into a Chassidishe Farbrengen infused with Chassidishe nigunim. As was known, Reb Shlomo Aharon had a unique talent in Chassidishe nigunim.

After the Rebbe accepted the *nesius*, Reb Shlomo Aharon would leave his shul after Musaf and walk for an hour-and-a-half to 770 to participate in the Farbrengens on Shabbos Mevorchim. He did so through his seventies, though it was not easy for a man of his age.

#### CHASSIDUS CLASSES FOR GIRLS

In 5697, the Frierdiker Rebbe instructed his chassidim in Brooklyn to organize Chassidus shiurim for girls. The letter was addressed to three distinguished chassidim, Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, Reb Shlomo Aharon, and Rabbi Yochanon Gordon, and refers to them as 'Roim'-shepherds.

They were to teach a shiur once a week and the shiurim should concentrate on easy Maamorim and chapters of Tanya. They should also designate time for the girls to read Sichos on their own, to show them the sweetness and sensitivity of Chassidus. Twice a month, a farbrengen should take place and one of the Sichos that they had studied should be discussed.

Over the course of the following years, Reb Shlomo Aharon became involved in the activities of the three mosdos founded by the Frierdiker Rebbe; Machne Israel, Kehot and Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch. In addition to his work he also participated in raising funds for each of them.

In 5702, the Frierdiker Rebbe founded the Chevra Kadisha under Agudas Chasidei Chabad, and Reb Shlomo Aharon was appointed as one of the *gabaim* to conduct the mosad. His function was to supervise the selection of new members to the Chevra Kadisha, to coordinate the *levayas*, and to work with the cemetery.

In 5704, Reb Shlomo Aharon was selected along with Rabbi Hodokov and Dr. Mindel as members of a delegation from Machne Israel to visit a WWII refugee camp in Oswego, NY. The purpose of the visit was to encourage the refugees, assist with their physical needs and establish spiritual aid in chinuch and the strengthening of Yiddishkeit. While there, they set up a board to teach the children, a Chevra

Mishnayos and a Chevra Tehillim, in addition to various activities related to physical necessities.

#### FUND RAISING FOR LUBAVITCH YESHIVOS

Reb Shlomo Aharon had a special fondness for Yeshiva Tomchei Tmimim where he had studied for seven years. He participated in meetings on behalf of the yeshiva and its branches, and would travel to different states to raise funds for them.

At times, Reb Shlomo Aharon would travel with Reb Shmuel Dovid Raichik. On one occasion prior to their trip the Rebbe told Reb Shlomo Aharon, "*Ir zolt zehn az er zol esen, nit loit zaina hasogos, nor loit iyere hasogos*", ("You should see to it that Rabbi Raichik should eat, not according to his standards, but according to your standards").

Once when Reb Shlomo Aharon was in Florida, he learned that there was an elderly patient in a hospital who refused to eat. Reb Shlomo Aharon approached the Yid and began speaking to him in his own language, calming him down. Then he stayed until the elderly man was eating normally again.

#### EXCEPTIONAL HISKASHRUS TO THE REBBE'IM

An anecdote that demonstrated his devotion to the Rebbe was told by his son-in-law Rabbi Sharfstein. "My father-in-law received a call from Rabbi Hodokov on a Wednesday notifying him that the Rebbe wanted to see him. In Yechidus the Rebbe told him that he wanted Reb Shlomo Aharon to represent him at the Chanukas Habayis of a shul in Kfar Chabad."

"The Rebbe added, 'It is not worthwhile

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to travel on Thursday because it is doubtful if you will get there before Shabbos. Therefore you should travel today.' My father-in-law did not have a valid passport, a visa for Israel, or a ticket. But when the Rebbe ordered - it was done without asking questions.

"Within three hours, my father-in-law arranged everything and came home to pack his suitcase. Boruch Hashem, my mother-in-law was home at that time. Otherwise, my father-in-law would have left to catch his flight without my mother-in-law having any knowledge of her husband whereabouts."

Reb Shlomo Aharon merited many exceptional kiruvim from the Frierdiker Rebbe and the Rebbe. He participated in the meals at the Frierdiker Rebbe's table; at Chassunahs where the Rebbe was Mesader Kiddushin, he would be the Master of Ceremonies, calling out the different kibudim; during the Rebbe's Farbrengens, Reb Shlomo Aharon sat on the bima among other distinguished chassidim.

#### KABBOLAS HANESIUS

In 5710, after the Frierdiker Rebbe's Histalkus, Reb Shlomo Aharon was among the initial older chassidim whose efforts were instrumental in the Rebbe's acceptance of the nesius.

Hours after the levaya of the Frierdiker Rebbe, Reb Shlomo Aharon sat with the chossid Horav Sholom Posner and said, "We have a Rebbe in a physical body", referring to the Rebbe.

The knowledge of the Rebbe's greatness was nothing new to Reb Shlomo Aharon. He had heard about the Rebbe from the Rebbetzin Nechama Dina who shared the comments of her husband, the Frierdiker Rebbe, that if the Rebbe had lived during the Alter Rebbe's time, even then he would have stood out as unique.

In Sivan of 5710, the Rebbe called a meeting. He saw that there was no great concern to maintain the mosdos. The Rebbe stated that he would continue with his responsibilities, but the new projects that he took upon himself would slow down. The assembled felt distressed by these words. Reb Shlomo Aharon stood up and declared, "The Rebbe can send everyone who is present here where he wishes, and as we were with Moshe [i.e. the Frierdiker Rebbe], we will obey your orders."

At the end of Teves 5711, there was an announcement in the newspaper that Chassidei Chabad had accepted the Rebbe as the Nosi of Chabad on the 24th of Teves. The official acceptance of the leadership would take place on Yud Shvat. When the Rebbe saw this announcement, he instructed Rabbi Hodokov to publish a disclaimer.

Rabbi Hodokov was shocked and did not know what to do. He contacted Reb Shmuel Levitin, Reb Yisroel Jacobson and Reb Shlomo Aharon. He told them what the Rebbe planned and notified them that he would wait a few hours, and during that time, they should try to do something.

The three chassidim immediately ran to 770 and entered the Rebbe's room.

Reb Shlomo Aharon broke down crying, "What is the Rebbe doing to us...?" and he cried in front of the Rebbe for half-an-hour. Reb Shmuel Levitin told the Rebbe that this announcement was made on be-



half of chassidim and was not from the Rebbe. Reb Shlomo Aharon requested that although the Rebbe did not consent to the acceptance of the nesius, he should not publish a denial in the newspaper. The Rebbe finally consented to this request.

A few days before Yud Shvat 5711, the first *Hilulo* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, Reb Shlomo Aharon had a dream. He saw the Frierdiker Rebbe telling the Rebbe to become Rebbe, adding, "Ma titzak eloy - why do you scream out to me, you are the nosi of the generation, Daber el Bnei Yisroel - say Chassidus for Yidden, V'yisou- and lead them to Moshiach."

In the morning, Reb Shlomo Aharon wrote a note to the Rebbe about his dream. The Rebbe responded with a yasher koach. Chassidim interpreted this to mean that the Rebbe would eventually accept the nesius. This indeed took place on Yud Shvat 5711.

#### A SPECIAL CONNECTION

The Rebbe had a very special relationship with Reb Shlomo Aharon as can be seen in the following stories:

Zalmen Shazar, President of Israel visited the Rebbe on Purim in 5731. Reb Shlomo Aharon was a member of the delegation of distinguished chassidim chosen by the Rebbe to greet President Shazar on the Rebbe's behalf in his hotel in Manhattan, and to escort him back to 770.

On Simchas Torah 5738 when the Rebbe became ill, Reb Shlomo Aharon received a bottle of mashke from the Rebbe to make a Farbrengen. He was one of few chassidim who merited to visit the Rebbe

that day. When he entered the room and saw the Rebbe's condition he began to cry. The Rebbe said, "Crying is against my wishes, you need to be joyous."

It would seem that Reb Shlomo Aharon was constantly occupied with fundraising and mosdos, but as a Rav in a distinguished neighborhood, he carried the spiritual responsibility for hundreds of families and did so with his full energy and fervor.

He was an eloquent orator and knew how to inspire his audience to strengthen their fulfillment of Mitzvos. Hundreds of people whom he was mekarev to Yiddishkeit would follow his teachings, and he inspired many families to follow a life of Torah and Mitzvos.

He established a Talmud Torah for the children of his community. He spoke English well and had a good relationship with the youth. They would come to his home on Shabbos and he would teach them Torah. His acquaintances in Benson Hurst described with pleasure his talent; how, even as an older man, he did not lose his flair with youth and the young Americans.

The Frierdiker Rebbe once read a letter in the newspaper from a girl who had doubts in *Emuna*. The editor's response to the girl was unsatisfactory. The Frierdiker Rebbe asked for Reb Berel Chaskind before Shacharis. He wanted him to see the article and to obtain the original letter that the girl had sent. Reb Berel obtained the letter for the Frierdiker Rebbe. The Rebbe handed the letter to Reb Shlomo Aharon who then contacted the girl and guided her back to her roots.

At a time when others would have retired, he continued to be active in all of the Rebbe's projects. Prior to the Six-Day-War, the Rebbe initiated Mivtza Tefillin. Reb Shlomo Aharon, then seventy years old, participated in Mivtza Tefillin every day. He would stop at the stores on his way to shul to put on Tefillin with the storekeepers.

Once, at the convention of the Lubavitch Youth Organization, Reb Shlomo Aharon stated, gripping his white beard, "We are Lubavitch Youth Organization. As the Rebbe said, 'Young age is not measured according to the age on the passport' "

On the seventh of Cheshvan of 5743, Reb Shlomo Aharon completed his avoda in this world and returned his Neshoma to its creator.

The Rebbe participated in the levaya to escort Reb Shlomo Aharon to his final rest, and instructed a bus be available for Chassidim to travel with the levaya to the Bais Hachaim.

Yehi Zichro Boruch.

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