

א ציור פון א חסיד

Reb Chatche Feigin

The renowned chassid, R' Yechezkel (Chatche) Feigin, was born in Lukima, a small town in White Russia, in the year 5655. At a young age, his father, R' Shmuel, sent him to learn in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch. With time, he became active in reviewing and transcribing the maamorim of the Rebbe Rashab and was soon considered a maskil in chassidus.

In 5672 the Rebbe Rashab founded Yeshivas Toras Emes in Chevron and R' Chatche was sent together with his close friend, R' Alter Simchovitch, to help establish the yeshiva. Later, R' Chatche would relate how he would lie on the roof and meditate on Chassidic concepts for up to nine hours straight! However, with the outbreak of World War I in 5678, they were forced to return to Lubavitch.

In the summer of 5680, R' Chatche married Sosha, the daughter of R' Yehuda Leib Ceitlin from the town of Zuravitch, and, in the years following, served as mashpia of the underground yeshivos of Tomchei Temimim in various cities such as Homil, Poltava, Nevell, Charkov, and Rostov. Additionally, he also directed the yeshivos in the cities of Rahmen, Kremenchug, Ostoshkov, Polotzk, and Vitebsk. As part of his responsibilities, R' Chatche would regularly visit each yeshivah to oversee their progress and management, and would then travel to the Frierdiker Rebbe with a detailed report and to receive instructions for the future.

R' Chatche rarely became emotional. He was an intellectual and his reactions were always carefully calculated. Nevertheless, when the Rebbe Rashab was nistalek on Beis Nissan 5680, R' Chatche couldn't contain



Reb Yechezkel Feigin HY"D
(5645 - 5702)

himself and wept openly.

Two more instances are told of where R' Chatche surrendered to his emotions:

About six months after the Rebbe Rashab's histalkus, the Frierdiker Rebbe, who had just accepted the nesius, turned to R' Chatche to assume the role of mashpia in Tomchei Tmimim. R Chatche politely declined, claiming he was not suitable for the position and was not ready to accept such tremendous responsibility. The Frierdiker Rebbe nodded in understanding, but asked that R' Chatche remain in Lubavitch for

Tishrei so he could give the matter some more thought.

Despite his misgivings regarding the position, R' Chatche stayed on, and soon realized what the Frierdiker Rebbe had had in mind in telling him to stay.

During Mincha on Yom Kippur, the Frierdiker Rebbe was called up for maftir, and R' Chatche was fortunate to be standing in front of the Bima while he began to read the Haftorah. The Frierdiker Rebbe read the story of Yonah Hanavi in his usual tune, recalling the story of Yonah refusing to prophesize about the destruction of Ninveh, and attempting to flee from his responsibility by boarding a ship to Tarshish.

As the Frierdiker Rebbe read, R' Chatche began to feel faint; the Frierdiker Rebbe was speaking directly to him! The story of Yonah was exactly like his!

When the Frierdiker Rebbe recited the words "For before Hashem he has run away," R' Chatche could no longer contain himself. Bursting into tears, he ran from his place, resolving to assume the position of Mashpia.

The third incident that brought R' Chatche to tears was in the year 5687, when the Soviet Secret Police were hounding the Frierdiker Rebbe and his chassidim for their clandestine activities in spreading yiddishkeit. The bulk of the responsibility in maintaining the underground activity now fell to R' Chatche. With absolute mesirus nefesh, he carried out the Rebbe's holy work, rarely taking a break – even for his own needs.

However, R' Chatche became so pressed for time that he barely managed to learn chassidus, let alone to daven at length. His

new reality bothered him to no end; how could a Chossid survive without learning chassidus and without sufficient time to daven? And so, deeply troubled, R' Chatche entered the Frierdiker Rebbe's room for yechidus, begging for some time to learn Chassidus each day.

When R' Chatche finished speaking, the Frierdiker Rebbe responded in brief: "In this and this city a Yeshiva does not yet exist, in another city a Cheder must be established, and in yet another city such and such must be done."

Understanding the Frierdiker Rebbe's response to mean his request would not be granted, R' Chatche began to cry and, surprisingly, the Frierdiker Rebbe joined him.

After a few moments, the Frierdiker Rebbe said: "If we would all do what we want, what would become of that which must get done? Is this what the aybershter wants?"

One time, while on a shlichus from the Frierdiker Rebbe, R' Chatche visited a particular city. The local bochorim arranged a farbrengen and soon found themselves sitting around a table, waiting for R' Chatche

TRUE MECHALELEI SHABBOS...

In the city of Poltava lived a particular Jew who earned his living as a shoemaker. At that time, the Communists began to fiercely persecute religion, and pressured Jewish merchants into doing business on Shabbos. As the harassment intensified, this particular Jew could no longer withstand the pressure, and soon began opening his store on Shabbos.

Every shabbos morning, R' Chatche, who then served as a mashpia in the Poltava Tomchei Tmimim, would pass by the shoemaker's store on his way to mikvah. Seeing the store open each Shabbos pained R' Chatche deeply, and once, he made mention of this by a farbrengen. The bochorim assumed he was referring to the chillul Shabbos and were greatly surprised when he expressed otherwise.

"We consider this shoemaker to be a mechalel Shabbos and rightfully so – *al pi din* he is. Nevertheless, I cannot help but wonder: does he really understand what Shabbos is all about and what it means to desecrate the Shabbos? The impression I get is that

Charkov and once related a story:

One Shabbos, on Friday night, R' Chatche called me to his table and asked if I was well versed in the maamer I had learned that week. Turning a deep shade of red, I stammered unintelligibly – I had barely understood the maamer!

R' Chatche warned me that if I did not know the maamer thoroughly within a week, I could no longer learn in Tomchei Tmimim. Naturally, I spent the entire week learning the maamer, but because at that time I didn't yet have an appreciation for learning chassidus, I didn't grasp the material.

The next Friday night, R' Chatche called me again to his table and began to test me on the maamer. When he concluded his questioning, he looked me straight in the eye and said: "I get the impression that you don't particularly enjoy learning chassidus."

"That's possible," I mumbled, averting my eyes.

"How come?" He asked.

"In nigleh," I replied, "there are pilpulim, questions, and answers. Every masechta and perek is made up of many sugyos, each one

שיחת שמח"ת תרפ"ט:

"כ"ק אדמו"ר אמר לר' יחזקאל שיקרא כל התמימים שיעמדו כנגדו שיראה אותם, והתחיל לדבר אליהם בזה"ל: .. בשנת תרס"ג בעת שמח"ת. . . אאמו"ר קרא אותי ונתן לי צנצנת משקה ואמר: הנך מנהל פועל ומנהל בפועל, ואמר לי עמוד ותחזיק המשקה ותקרא לכל התמימים לנגדי שאראה אותם. כ"ק אדמו"ר שאל לכאור"א בפרט איך שמו, ונתן לר' יחזקאל משקה, ואמר לו עמוד הנך מנהל בפועל.."

Reb Chatche joining the Sheva Brochos of Reb Moshe Pinchos Katz, Sivan 5698, in Otvotzk.



to share with them his insights and anecdotes. But R' Chatche sat in silence throughout the evening.

Hoping that he would eventually begin farbrengen, the bochorim sang one niggun after another, but R' Chatche remained expressionless. The night steadily grew late and yet, R' Chatche still didn't speak!

Finally, the mashpia of the yeshiva turned to him, politely requesting an explanation. "R' Chatche! The bochorim want to hear a chassidishe vort; why do you keep silent?"

R' Chatche looked at him and responded: "I want the bochorim to see what happens to a chassid who doesn't learn chassidus."

this fellow never learned Hilchos Shabbos and definitely never learned the inner meaning of Shabbos. And yet, *al pi din* he is considered a mechalel Shabbos.

"But we all know what Shabbos is; we have learnt chassidus and we understand – to some degree – the deeper meaning of Shabbos. We know that every minute must be used for avodas hashem. So, if a few minutes go by without being used to the fullest, *mir zaynen di emese mechalelei shabbos* (we are the true mechalelei shabbos)!"

GESHMAK IN CHASIDUS

R' Mendel Futerfas learned by R' Chatche in

addressing a different topic. Chassidus, on the other hand, always explains the same things."

R' Chatche answered me with a moshol:

"When a small child begins learning the alef beis, he thinks there exists only one alef and one beis. Only when he starts learning how to read, he sees that there is more than just one of each letter. This may confuse the child, because while trying to compose a word or a sentence, he now needs to use the same letter more than once. So, although one letter may look exactly the same in any context, nevertheless, its meaning can vary.

"The same is true when learning chassidus. While it may appear repetitive, when looking

"ת"ל בא שר הממונה על עניני תורה תמימה, תלמידנו המשובח מוה"ר ר' יחזקאל שי' פייגין, אשר בו בחרתי לקחתו אתי עמי לעשות העבודה הפנימית, לבוא בכתובים עם כל ידידנו אנ"ש והתמימים יחיו בהנוגע לחלקנו וגורלנו בחיים טובים בגשמיות וברוחניות אשר הנחילנו הוד כ"ק אבותינו רבותינו צוקל"ה נבג"מ זי"ע".

(ממכתב אדמו"ר מוהריי"צ כ"ה כסלו תרפ"ח)

Tomim.

Suddenly, the bochur keeping watch burst into the room, warning that someone was approaching the house. Frantic, the Bochurim sought any sense of refuge – behind the bookshelf, under the bed and even squeezing among the rafters in the ceiling. Several tense minutes passed until the Bochurim felt safe to venture out of their hiding places; it was a false alarm.

The bochurim sat back down at the table and R' Chatche asked them to explain their feverish activity just minutes before. "How can it be that despite the imminent danger nobody wept?"

Confused, the bochurim replied that crying would be of no benefit. "We had to simply run and hide ourselves."

"If so," asked R' Chatche, "why did you shed tears earlier by the farbrengen?"

The Frieddiker Rebbe reading 'Hatomim' with great satisfaction.

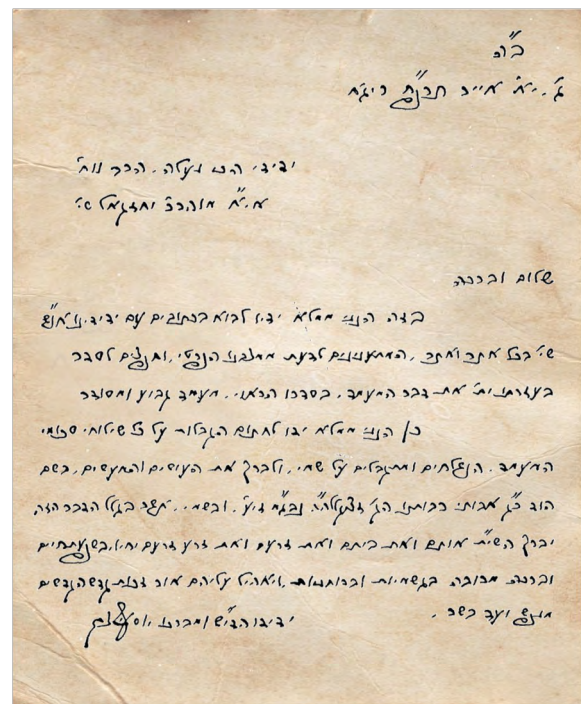


In Kislev of R' 5688 Chatche and his family left Russia for the city of Riga, where the Frieddiker Rebbe had settled earlier. There, he continued to serve as the Frieddiker Rebbe's personal secretary and gabbai, a job for which he was appointed the year before, after R' Chonye Morozov's imprisonment.

At the Tenoim of the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin on Vov Kislev 5689, R' Chatche had the zechus of being one of the eidim on the shtar tenaim – a zechus he received as well for the chassuna of the Frieddiker Rebbe's youngest daughter, Rebbetzin Sheina Horenshtein. The Frieddiker Rebbe also appointed him to direct Maamad, the fund designated for the personal needs of Beis Harav.

In the summer of 5689 he travelled to America a few days ahead of the Frieddiker Rebbe to make the necessary preparations for the visit. And again, in 5693 he travelled with the Frieddiker Rebbe to Warsaw and to Otvozk, in 5695. At that time, the Igud Talmidei Hatemimim began to publish the Koivet Hatomim, a magazine replete with chassidishe content. R' Chatche was appointed editor of a column consisting of haaros ubiurim in chassidus. From time to time he would also write his own pilpulim in chassidus.

With the outbreak of World War II, R' Chatche and his family fled to Warsaw and,



on Hei Teves 5700 they escaped to Riga together with the Frieddiker Rebbe. Later, when the Frieddiker Rebbe escaped to America, R' Chatche and his family did not manage to leave and all subsequent efforts to save them were in vain.

On Yud Kislev 5702, the Nazis yimach shemam made an *aktion* and herded thousands of Jews into a shul while others were made to stand and watch the gruesome spectacle. They witnessed how R' Itche Der Masmid opened the aron kodesh, removed a sefer torah, and exclaimed: "We have the great merit of fulfilling the mitzvah of mesirus nefesh al Kiddush Hashem. Therefore we must rejoice!" He laid one hand on the shoulder of the chassid, R' Elya Chaim Althois, his other on the shoulder of R' Chatche and together they broke out in a joyful dance while singing the niggun hakafos. The Nazis doused the building in gasoline and set fire to the shul, the flames devouring the building and killing everyone inside. R' Chatche's wife, his son Shmuel Leib, and his four daughters were murdered by the Nazis as well.

מסופר שיום אחד בשנת תש"ה הובהל הרמ"ש [כ"ק אדמו"ר] לבוא מיד לביתו של חותנו אדמו"ר מוהריי"צ. בבואו מצא את הרבי ריי"צ כשהוא שוכב על הארץ ללא הכרה, והרופאים מתאמצים להשיב את נפשו. לאחר בירור, העלה הרמ"ש שהתעלפות ואיבוד ההכרה אירעו באמצע קריאת מכתב. מישוהו מבני-הבית מצא את המכתב מונח על שולחן הרבי ריי"צ, וכשעיין בו מצא שאחד החסידים תיאר בו בפרוטרוט כיצד הנאצים סגרו את בית הכנסת ושפכו עליו נפט, ור' חאצ"ע פייגין, ועוד חסידים היו בפנים, וכך יצאה נשמתם בקדושה ובטהרה. כנראה, מרוה צערו בקריאת המכתב התעלף הרבי ריי"צ ואיבד את ההכרה.