

## א ציור פון א חסיד

# Radat"z Chein

"I believe it would be proper for you to write your memories of the chassidim you met from the early generations – for example, הרה"ח הרה"ג הרב, פרץ and his son Chein. I see great importance in this, for even the simplest chassidishe story brings much benefit, especially the sayings of a Farbrengen of elder Chassidim, for their words, whether spoken in earnest or jest, or even sharply are full of meaning."

(אג"ק מוהרי"צ ח"ה עמוד קטו)

### FAMILY

The Chossid Reb Dovid Tzvi Chein, better known as "Hershel Chernigover," or by the acronym "the Radatz," was born in 5606, a son of Reb Peretz, a Chassid of the Mittlerer Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek. At a young age, Reb Dovid Tzvi married Perel Guta Hilvitz, the daughter of a wealthy businessman in Tshashnik, a small town in White Russia. They had eight children; three sons (Avrohom, Mendel, and Dovber) and five daughters. Their third daughter, Rochel, married Harav Sholom Shlomo Schneerson, the brother of Harav Levi Yitzchok and the uncle of the Rebbe.

### AN OVED AND YOREI SHOMAYIM

At only twelve years old the Radatz went to Lubavitch with his father and had a Yechidus with the Tzemach Tzedek. During the Yechidus, the Tzemech Tzedek turned to him and described the importance of having kavanah while making brochos. "Take heed, it is time to grow up;

when you are about to make a Brochah on a food or drink, and you say the words ברוך אתה, remember whom ברוך אתה is referring to."

From that day on, before he would make a Brochah, the Radatz would lean his forehead on his right hand – as one would when thinking deeply – and focus on the meaning of the Brochah. One time, the Radatz passed by someone making a brochah on a fruit and, when he heard the words ברוך אתה ה', he screamed ברוך הוא with such enthusiasm that he startled those around him, and the man holding the fruit nearly dropped it.

The Radatz was also known as a great Oved. Reb Yisroel Jacobson once visited the Radatz's home in Chernigov and describes what he saw.

"At about two in the afternoon I reached the Radatz's home and through the keyhole to his room I saw him wearing his tallis and tefillin and finishing איזו

מקומן. He stopped for a moment to drink a cup of milk and then began davening word for word from the 'תפילה למשה' siddur, with the commentaries of the well renowned Mekubal, the רמ"ק. Watching him point to each word made it clear that he was concentrating on the Kavanos written there, and it took about an hour and forty minutes for him to Daven until after Shmoneh Esrei."

Another story is told of when Dr. Kubelsky once visited the Radatz and, when he saw the Radatz was still davening, he commented to his children, "Your father is infatuated with Hashem."

Throughout his life the Radatz suffered tremendously; two of his sons and a daughter died while still young. His son Dovber passed away during the Sheve Brachos after his own Chasunah, and Mendel, who was the Rov in the city of Nezin, was murdered על קידוש השם in 5679. And yet, he accepted everything with true Ahavas Hashem and was often heard to say "אוי רבש"ע! דו ביסט גערעכט, אוי" וייער טאטע"

Once, when a Ba'al Ha'bos complained that in spite of all his efforts in doing all he could to be Zoche to the Aibishter's brochos he was still not successful in business. The Radatz replied, "Soon is Yom Kippur; then you'll have an opportunity to forgive Hashem..."

### BAAL SHMUAH

The Radatz was known for being a Baal

Shmuah and many stories are told in his name. In his Reshimos, the Frieddiker Rebbe wrote that he “greatly enjoyed the visit of Reb Dovid Tzvi” because he was a Baal Shmuah.

“He heard much from his father, Reb Peretz, and other elder Chassidim, and he personally saw and heard much from the Tzemach Tzedek and the Rebbe Maharash. He also heard from my great uncles, the sons of the Tzemach Tzedek.

“Whenever he recounts a story, aside for being particular to tell each detail properly, he would teach a lesson from his stories.

“His stories and their explanations breath life into Ahavas Hatorah, Emunas Tzadikim and a Geshmak in keeping mitzvos. I hold dear the stories and lessons of the Radatz and, from the depths of my heart, I am grateful for the great kindness he does in speaking to me so often.”

#### GAON AND ROV

The Radatz was one of only three people that the Rebbe Maharsh gave Smicha to. He was a Gaon in Nigleh and, for more than fifty years, he corresponded with the greatest Torah scholars of his time.

In 5643, after the passing of his father, the Radatz succeeded his position as the Rav of the city of Chernigov and the surrounding areas. Some of the most well known Temimim learned and received smicha from him, including Reb Shmuel



Reb Dovid Tzvi Chein

The Radatz didn't allow for his picture to be taken, and thus, this is the only known picture of him. It was taken in middle of a Din Torah regarding Chalitzah, and the Radatz sat in deep concentration, oblivious to everything going on around him. Looking at the picture, you can see his hand still on a Sefer.

Levitin.

Reb Shmuel, after receiving his smicha, returned to the Rebbe Rashab and told him that he was asked three questions, but that he had been prepared to answer them because the Radatz had asked his brother, Reb Shmerel Levitin, the very same questions. “Is the Smicha worth anything under these circumstances?” he asked the Rebbe.

“When the Radatz gives Smicha,” the Rebbe replied, “it is certainly good”.

Once, the Czar came to visit Chernigov and, as was customary, the Rov, dressed in his Shabbos finery and holding a Sefer Torah, went out to greet him. When the Radatz came close to the Czar he placed his hand on his forehead and, with his usual concentration, loudly pronounced the Brocha, ‘שנתן מכבודו לבשר ודם’ so that all of those around him could answer Amen. Afterwards, one of his nephews who was cynical toward Yiddishkeit asked him, “You know that the Czar is a shikere goy, so why did you give him all of that respect and even make a brocha?” “Fool,” the Radatz replied, “he has a Malach.”

A talmid of the Radatz, Reb Alexander Sender Yudasin, once told the following story:

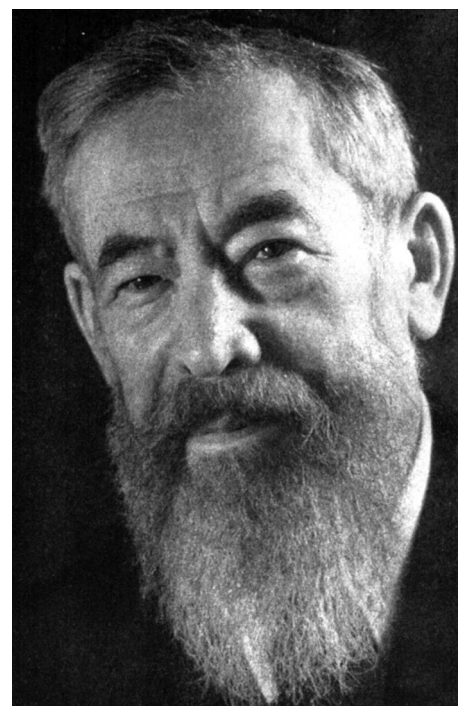
“When I was in the Radatz’s home, a man arrived with a live chicken, asking if



Rabbi Shmuel Levitin



Rabbi Alexander Sender Yudasin



Reb Avraham Chein, son of Radatz



it was Kosher to be Shechted. After a quick inspection of the chicken the Radatz said that he would need to look up the Halocha in various seforim, and asked him to come back the next day. However, the Radatz was overburdened with other responsibilities and, when the man returned the following day, the Radatz promised to get to it later that afternoon. "Never mind," the man said. "I don't want to waste your time; I'll just shecht it and sell it to a goy."

"That's what *you* say, but what does the Chicken say?" the Radatz replied. "It wants a Yid to eat it so that it can be Nisaleh and become דם ובשר of a Yid, not of a goy..."

Reb Avrohom, the son of the Radatz describes the following scene in his memoirs.

A Chosson once came to the Radatz to

receive permission to get married. After asking a few questions as to the young man's ancestry, the Radatz fell silent, turned pale and was visibly shaken to the core. It turned out that this man was a Mamzer De'Oreisah. Broken and crushed the Radatz finally turned to the man and with a voice choked with tears said "My son, you are not allowed to get married..." The young man, who was by the way, not an Am Ha'Aretz cried out "Why! What is it that makes it Ossur for me to marry this girl?" "No" interrupted the Radatz, "Not just this girl, you can't get married at all."

Tears began to flow down the Radatz's cheeks. It was clear that if he would be able, he would go to Shomaim to beg for mercy on behalf of this poor young man. Yet there was nothing he could do, the will of Hashem, not understood, yet clearly written. The Chosson was stunned, and

the Radatz began to comfort him non-stop. He took down from the bookshelf a Yalkut Shimoni, and began to read to the young man from the Medrash on the Pasuk וראיתי את דמעת העשוקים אשר אין להם מנוחם *Daniel the Tailor said this Possuk refers to the Mamzer who comes before Hashem and complains, 'What have I done wrong to deserve this awful fate. Not only that, but the Sanhedrin themselves come and push me away with the strength of Torah' and Hashem responds 'Upon Me is your complaints, upon Me are your tears and in the future I will seat you at my side.'*

#### MASKIL

The Radatz was also a great Maskil in Chassidus. The Rebbe mentions in several sichos that when the Radatz would contemplate an inyan in Chassidus that he didn't thoroughly understand but which he knew to be true, he would say, "אזוי אזוי"

By Chassidim it is customary not to use honorary titles. In fact, the greater the Chassid, the fewer titles he was known by.

I remember from my childhood that the Radatz was referred to without any titles; not Reb Tzvi Hirsh, not even Tzvi Hirsh, but rather Tzvi Hirshel. I tried looking for a source for this behavior and I finally found a Gemorah in Shabbos (נ"ו ע"א) that describes how Uriyah HaChiti was considered a "מורד במלכות" because he addressed Yoav with the title "אדוני יואב" in front of Dovid Hamelech. And the same is true by Chassidim; because the Torah of the Rebbe is engraved in our minds, it is as though we are constantly standing before the Rebbe, and in front of the Rebbe, how could we use a title for another Chossid?

(קטע משיחת ש"פ ויצא תשמ"ג)

A man once related to the Radatz the greatness of his Rebbe.

"It was Shevei Shel Pesach and my Rebbe was called up for the Shira. During the reading, he reached such a great level that it seemed he was

truly reliving the story of Krias Yam Suf, and he lifted the bottom of his clothing as though he were actually crossing the sea.

The Radatz smiled and responded in a soft, kind voice. "Indeed it is amazing to reach the level of reliving the parsha, but why, at that great height, could he not forget about his clothes for a moment?"



Reb Yisroel Jacobson and Reb Mendel Aronov were sitting at a Kiddush made by Rebbetzin Chanah (in honor of chof av or simchas torah), and their conversation turned to the Radatz.

Reb Yisroel commented that he had learned by the Radatz, and Rebbetzin Chana, who had overheard their conversation, added, "I too was lucky enough to know him, and there was in fact a lot to know."

The news passed swiftly through the city of Chernigov, leaving shock and sorrow in its wake. Reb Yekutiell, a wealthy businessman and pillar of the community, had been arrested on charges of tax evasion and misappropriation of government funds.

...איז דער ענין...

Every Shabbos he would chazer two Maamorim in Shul; one before Kabbolas Shabbos and one by Shalosh Seudos. To hear a Maamor from him was a pleasurable experience, because he would explain it so clearly that even someone who was unfamiliar with chassidus could understand.

In 5638, when Likkutei Torah was reprinted in Vilna, Reb Anshel Aronovitz fixed approximately three thousand mistakes. When the Radatz saw this he was not happy. "You missed the point," he explained to Reb Anshel. "The purpose of Chassidus isn't to just acquire the knowledge of the topics discussed, but rather so that one begins to think about Chassidus all throughout his day. So, when the sefer was full of mistakes, before realizing the print-

ing error, one was forced to spend many hours thinking about what was actually written. Now that the mistakes were corrected, people can read through a Maamor quicker and, when they finish learning, who knows what they will go and do."

Until he was ten years old, the Radatz's father didn't allow him to learn chassidus. So when the Radatz finally began learning chassidus, it made a deep impression on him.

"The Yaakov I learnt about was a different Yaakov, and the Lavan was a different Lavan. Now, in Lubavitch, they start learning Chassidus from such a young age and they miss out on this benefit."

#### OPEN HOME

The Radatz was well known for his Hachnosas Orchim; he would never ask

any questions of his guests and he encouraged them to relax in his home as if it were their own. Reb Shmerel Sasonkin describes how the Radatz wouldn't keep a penny for himself, because whenever he would see someone who looked like they needed money, he would empty his pockets, and there was no lack of such people in his time.

Mrs. Shoshanah Zahavi-Chein, the Radatz's granddaughter, recounts two stories in illustrating the Radatz's care for his fellow Jew.

*Already as children there were little valuables left in our home; the only thing we had was a small silver tobacco box. One day, however, the tobacco box went missing, and after hours of searching for it, we finally despaired. "Don't worry," said my Zeidie, "I was Mafkir it so that the one who took it should not be Oiver on the Issur of*

All who knew Reb Yekutiel had no doubt of his innocence. Reb Yekutiel was known for his honesty, charity and modesty. Despite his immense wealth and influential position, he regarded every man as his equal and was always ready to lend a helping hand and attentive ear. For this, he had earned the respect and trust of all Chernigov's residents, Jew and non-Jew alike. But this was czarist Russia, where a man could be arrested on a bureaucratic caprice or by the stroke of a vengeful commissioner's pen.

Inexplicably, Reb Yekutiel was convicted. Nothing -- not his connections in the government, not the numerous appeals by his expensive lawyers, nor the prayers of the community -- could stave off the fate ordained for him. Reb Yekutiel was sentenced to ten years of hard labor in distant Siberia.

On the day before Reb Yekutiel was sent east, a man knocked on the door of Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Chein, rabbi of Chernigov. "Rabbi," said the visitor, who was none other than the warden of the local jail, "Reb Yekutiel requests that you come

see him. Special permission has been granted for you to visit him in his cell, should you desire to come."

"Certainly," said the Rabbi, "of course I'll come," and hurried to get his coat.



Reb Yisroel Jacobson

Tears filled Rabbi Dovid Tzvi's eyes at the sight that met him upon entering the cell. Reb Yekutiel, too, was overwhelmed with emotion. The two men embraced and wept silently for some time. Finally, the prisoner began to speak:

"I asked you to come, Rabbi, not because I have any personal request to make, but because I want

to tell you why I am here. Perhaps others can learn a lesson from my story.

"Several months ago, I was traveling to Petersburg for a series of meetings regarding my dealings with the government. As usual, I obtained a compartment in the first-class section of the train -- a crucial necessity for any businessman seeking potential contacts among government officials and fellow merchants. It was then that I learned that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was on the

Geneiva.”

*There was a businessman in Chernigov, one of the respected members of the community, whose finances took a downward turn. Desperate for help and trying to stave off bankruptcy, he turned to my Zeide with his troubles, maintaining that a loan (for a particular amount of money) would put him back on his feet. My Zeide immediately took out a mortgage on his house and loaned the fellow the money. However, a short while later, the businessman immigrated to America, leaving my Zeide with the mortgage. Not being able to afford the payments, my Zeide's house was repossessed and the family was forced to live in rented homes.*

#### AN ASKAN

During World War I thousands of refugees found their way to Chernigov and the surrounding areas. To the Radatz, every refugee was like walking holiness and every draftee to the army like a Korban Oilah. Many Yidden from east of Galitzia were imprisoned in Chernigov where they suffered under appalling conditions. Seeing their suffering, the Radatz gathered together ten of his trusted friends and traveled to Kiev to meet with Leon Trotsky, the general in command of the South-

Western Front. When they arrived, the Radatz negotiated through the maze of army bureaucracy and finally secured a meeting with the general, whom he petitioned for the Yidden to be freed from prison and kept under guard in Chernigov. In response to the General's furious refusal, he also offered to sign himself as a guarantor that no prisoners would escape the town. It was an act of self-sacrifice for people that he had never met, and people who never found out who was responsible for liberating them.

Reb Avrohom Chein, son of the Radatz, tells another story of the Radatz's askonus during the war.

*On Pesach a seder was held in shul for the Jewish soldiers who were given a day's reprieve from the front lines. As the Rov of the town, it was my father's job to lead the seder. He tried to begin the Seder but kept breaking into tears, and when he finally began, he said, "ממציים From the depths, the pain, and challenges קראתי I have cried out, לפני for Hashem to act towards us as a son" and he again started to cry.*

*Tears more pure than those that my father cried that night, I don't know if the Eibishter has in his trove. What did those tears express? Care for another Yid who was suffering, pain from the great burden*

*placed on the Jewish nation, bewilderment that reached close to questioning the "Good and Kind"... Dear father, how can you allow this to go on... Yet also, surrender to G-d's infinite knowledge that He alone knows how this too is the true good...*

#### LAST DAYS

In 5685, the Radatz traveled to Eretz Yisroel to live out his days in Yerushalayim. Nine months later, on 24 Kislev 5686, the Radatz felt that his time had come and instructed for ten men to gather at his bedside at twelve o'clock. The Radatz lay on his bed, placed his hands on his chest and closed his eyes. He said the Shema aloud with great Kavonah and, as he reached the end of the word Echod, his Neshomah left his body.

His Levayah was held on Friday afternoon, Erev Chanuka, and, despite a heavy downpour, was attended by a large crowd, including Harav Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld and Harav Avrohom Yitzchok HaKohen Kook.

The Radatz was laid to rest in the Chabad section of Har Hazeisim. (When the Friediker Rebbe was shown the Nusach of the Matzevah he instructed to add 'עובד אלקים'.)

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train.

"I passed by the Rebbe's compartment, hoping to catch a glimpse of his holy face. The door was ajar, and suddenly I found myself gazing into his eyes -- eyes that looked deeply into mine and seemed to know the innermost reaches of my soul. For a long moment I stood there, rooted to the spot. It was a while before I realized that the Rebbe was motioning to me to enter.

"With awe and trepidation I entered the Rebbe's compartment. But the Rebbe soon put me at ease, inviting me to sit and offering me a cigarette. He expressed great interest in our community, as well as in my personal life and business dealings. In parting, the Rebbe said to me: 'I'm sure you've heard of the railway that the government is planning to build across Siberia. I think this is a perfect business opportunity for you. As one who has close connections with Minister Potysukshnikov, you should be able to obtain a sizable contract as a lumber supplier.'

"I returned to my compartment in a state of confusion. The last thing I expected from the Rebbe was a business tip. On the one hand, I felt that the advice of *atzaddik* should be followed. On the other hand, the proposal held no attraction for me, despite its great financial potential. My business affairs were going well, thanks to G-d; why should I leave my family and community and spend many long months, if not years, in far-off Siberia? At the end, I hesitated long enough for others to avail themselves of the opportunity -- to my considerable relief, I must confess.

"And so, now I'm on my way to Siberia. I thought that the Rebbe was dispensing business advice, but he must have seen that there is something there, in Siberia, that I must achieve -- some part of my mission in life that must be played out in the frozen east. I could have gone in comfort, as a wealthy businessman and government contractor. Now I am going in chains..."