

R' Sender Alexander Rainin

By Rabbi Michael A Seligson

In a Sicha on Shabbos Nitzovim 5718/1958, the Rebbe spoke with pain about the Chossid Reb Sender Rainin who had passed away that week and had not been “eulogized according to Halacha”. Chassidim understood that the Rebbe was referring to the fact that Reb Sender had not been interred closer to the resting place of the Frierdiker Rebbe.

The Rebbe continued “I am speaking about Rainin. He was a quiet person, and did not get involved in anything. In his younger years, he merited great kiruvim from the Rebbe RaShaB. Reb Sender, although ineligible to study in Tomchei Temimim because he was older, merited many kiruvim from the Rebbe RaShab and heard from him many things. On numerous occasions he would remain in the Rebbe RaShaB’s room for significant periods of time. The Rebbe RaShaB would share and discuss many different topics with him. Being that he was such a quiet and modest person, I never managed to draw anything from him but it was clear that these things were engraved in his memory.

‘Regarding all the matters after the burial, in the higher worlds, the Rebbe RaShaB has surely taken care that all matters should be according to “Halacha” and even more so. But regarding the matters before the burial, since he was a true chossid, a l’chaim should therefore be said for his Neshama. This will be a nachas ruach for the Rebbe RaShaB.”

Chassidim who participated in the Farbrengen asked each other about this Reb Sender of whom the Rebbe

spoke with such pain. Who was he? What was the relationship between him and the Rebbe? When did their acquaintance begin?

Reb Alexander Sender Yitzchok Rainin was born in Leningrad, Russia in 5637/1877. At a young age he became critically ill, and was given two additional names, Chaim Avrohom. He was a descendent of the Alter Rebbe’s talmid, Horav Hakodosh Reb Aharon Strasheler and was a very modest and quiet person.

PURCHASING AN ESROG FOR THE REBBE RASHAB

During WWI esrogim were very hard to obtain and Reb Sender traveled to Italy to purchase an esrog for the Rebbe RaShaB. Upon his return Reb Sender wanted to inform the Rebbe RaShaB at once that the esrog had arrived. It was the day before Erev Sukkos, the 13th of Tishrei, the Hilula of the Rebbe Maharash. The Rebbe RaShab was the chazan, leading the tfilos to commemorate his father’s yahrzeit. Reb Sender approached the amud where the Rebbe RaShaB was davening and placed the esrog on it.

The daughter of Hachossid Reb Schneur Zalman Seligson was suggested as a possible shidduch. Reb Sender consulted the Rebbe RaShaB who advised him, “With this person you could live a refined life”.

In his letters to Reb Sender, the Rebbe RaShaB referred to Reb Sender’s father-in-law, Reb Schneur Zalman, as his relative. Reb Schneur Zalman was a fourth generation descendent of the Alter Rebbe, and one of the supporting pillars of the Tomchei Tmimim Yeshiva



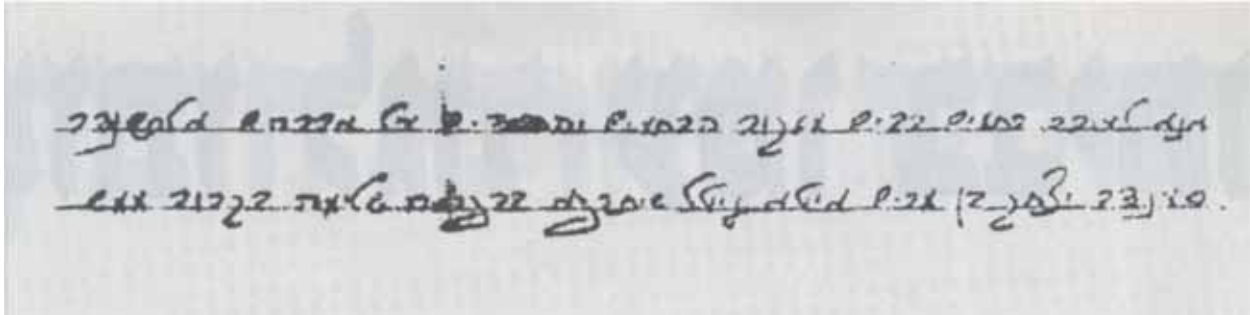
R' SENDER ALEXANDER RAININ
5637-5718

in Kharkov and later in Vilna. A scholar and a generous person, he was respected in his city. The Friediker Rebbe referred to Reb Schneur Zalman, “The famous gvir, who is known for praise in his generation, beloved by many, a baal tzedoko and doing favors; supported his family with a broad hand physically and spiritually. . . has expertise in the matters of the Yeshiva Tomchei Tmimim in Vilna”. In Elul 5689/1929, when the

Friediker Rebbe was in Vilna, he paid a special visit to Reb Zalman’s home.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FRIEDIKER REBBE

The relationship with the Friediker Rebbe developed in later years. The Friediker Rebbe recognized Reb Sender’s abilities and would often ask him to work on various projects. In 5686/1926, the Joint Distribution Committee donated money for the Jews in Russia. The



A PAN IN THE REBBE'S HOLY HANDWRITING ASKING FOR A REFUAH SHLEIMA FOR REB SENDER RAININ.

Frierdiker Rebbe chose people to form a committee to distribute the funds. One of its members was “Mr. Alexander Rainin from Neishtetel.”

FREEING THE FRIERDIKER REBBE

In 5687/1927, on the 15th of Sivan, the Frierdiker Rebbe was arrested for his activities in strengthening Yiddishkeit throughout Russia. Attempts were made to free him via diplomatic channels to various other governments. The Communist Russian government was a young one and wanted to establish diplomatic and economic relations with other countries.

Reb Sender was tasked with the job of contacting representatives of the different governments, particularly the German government, with which the Russians wished to establish trade. The strategy to have different countries apply pressure on the Russian government to free the Rebbe was ultimately successful, and the Frierdiker Rebbe was freed from prison on the 12th of Tammuz.

In a letter in 5688/1928, the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote about establishing a committee to deal with the hardships of the Jews in Russia. “There is painful news reaching us about the confiscation of the shuls and the destruction of cemeteries, which requires immediate strategizing. Last night, I received a telegram from my

very dear and esteemed friend Mr. Rainin, informing me that he received a telegram from London that a meeting is to take place in the coming days.”

CHASSIDUS IN FRENCH, ENGLISH, ITALIAN AND RUSSIAN

The Frierdiker Rebbe included Reb Sender in an assortment of colorful activities. The Frierdiker Rebbe would only have to make a request and Reb Sender would immediately take to the task. In Tishrei 5689/late 1928, the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote to Reb Sender about finding an expert who would be able to translate the popular Maamar Kinyan Hachaim from the original Yiddish. The Frierdiker Rebbe wanted it to be translated into French, English, Italian

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and Russian. “My desire is that it be translated into the languages of the Eastern countries such as Yemeni, Bukharian and Georgian. Every translation needs to be done by an expert who is well versed in the language and who also understands the topic.” The Frierdiker Rebbe employed Reb Sender in his projects because he respected him; in addition, there was a deep and affectionate relationship between them.

PERSONAL INVITATION TO THE REBBE'S WEDDING

Prior to the wedding, of the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, the Frierdiker Rebbe sent out various versions of the invitation to the wedding. Some Chassidim received personalized invitations, reflecting a close relationship. Reb Sender then in Paris received such an



invitation. The Frierdiker Rebbe wrote, “Although in the near future the entry cards to the wedding will be printed, I don’t want to wait and I am rushing to notify you [about the wedding]. My son-in-law, the Rashag is already on his way to Warsaw to arrange the visas and additional matters. If it is at all possible that he [Reb Sender] and his wife could participate, I would greatly appreciate it, and it is unnecessary to elaborate regarding the great yearning of seeing a dear and true friend at a simcha.”

There is no record of all the tasks and projects the Frierdiker Rebbe gave Reb Sender. However, it is evident from the Frierdiker Rebbe’s letter in Elul of 5689/1929, two weeks after his visit to Israel, that there was a steady contact between them. Prior to his arrival in Paris, the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote to his son-in-law, the Rebbe: “I request that you verify by Horenstein, the address of Rainin or his brother-in-law Gorlin in Paris, that he should relay to Mr. Rainin that I will be traveling Tuesday to Paris and I would like to meet him. If you should come to know of his location, send a telegram to him with all the above mentioned.”

In 5691/1931, the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote a letter to Dr. Smatline in which he discussed Dr. Smatline’s participation in a Rabbinic organization dedicated to disseminating information on Taharas Hamishpachah. The Frierdiker Rebbe wrote, “I have written to Mr. Rainin and at present have received from him additional letters. He hopes to obtain booklets in English with your letter included, in order to send them to France, Italy and Switzerland.”

THE DREAM

It is known among Chassidim that an expression of kiruv from a Rebbe was often expressed when the Rebbe would reveal or share something personal that was usually not shared with others. In the late 1950’s, Reb Sender shared the following story with Rabbi Moshe Herson, the head shliach of New Jersey, and in 1990 it was printed in *Sefer Toldos Reb Avrohom Horofe*, Dr. Avrohom Seligson’s biography.

In Cheshvan of the year 5693/late 1932, the Frierdiker Rebbe was unhappy about a certain issue. That night, his father, the Rebbe RaShaB, revealed himself to the Frierdiker Rebbe and asked, “Why do you feel so? You should know that your house is illuminated.” The

Frierdiker Rebbe began looking through the rooms of his home and found his son-in-law, the Rebbe, still sitting at an early morning hour and studying. Apparently, the Frierdiker Rebbe had personally shared this dream with R’ Sender.

When the Rebbe’s reshimas were discovered in the 1990’s, this story appeared therein. In addition, the Rebbe writes in the reshima, the next morning when the Frierdiker Rebbe spoke to the Rebbe, he began by telling him, “For my dream today, you would have to give mashkeh.” The Frierdiker Rebbe then kissed the Rebbe and relayed the details of his dream.

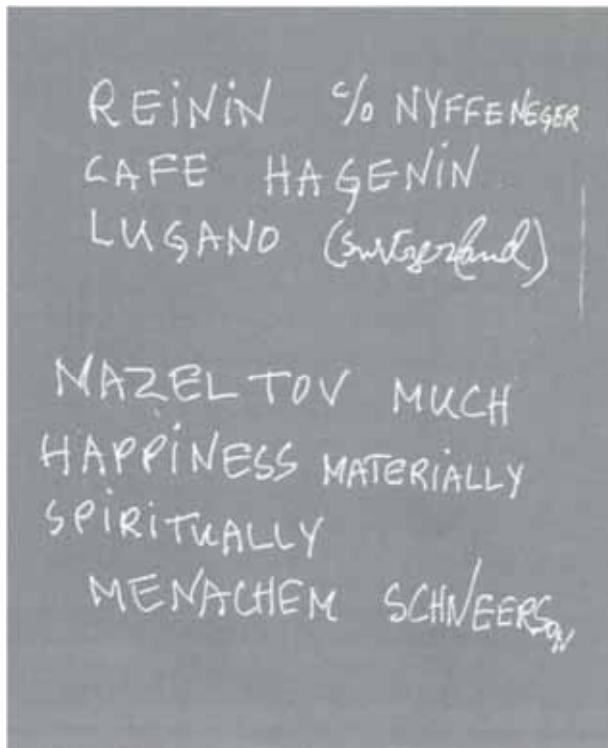
In the early 5690’s/1930’s the Frierdiker Rebbe turned to Reb Sender to arrange gatherings of Jewish university students to discuss chassidus and to make farbrengens.

IMPRISONED CHASSIDIM

In 5693/1933, at the height of Stalin’s reign of terror, a group of Anash in Batum, were charged with attempting to escape Russia by illegally crossing the border, and were imprisoned. The Frierdiker Rebbe wrote to Reb Sender, “Regarding the refugees, it was verified that they find themselves in prison with harsh conditions and, G-



A LETTER HANDWRITTEN BY THE REBBE IN FRENCH REQUESTING FOR VISAS FOR “A DEAR FRIEND OF OUR FAMILY” REB SENDER REININ.



TELEGRAM IN THE REBBE'S HOLY HANDWRITING SENT TO REB SENDER FOR A FAMILY SIMCHA: MAZEL TOV MUCH HAPPINESS MATERIALLY SPIRITUALLY.

d forbid, in danger..... Perhaps something can be done.” The chassidim were ultimately released in the winter of 5694.

The Frierdiker Rebbe purchased many seforim from Eretz Yisrael for his library. In one of his letters during this period (5692-5694/1932-1934) he wrote, “When you will convey all this to Mr. Rainin he will then explain that this is considered by me to be the greatest gift. I am sure that he will assist you in this matter”.

TICKETS FOR THE REBBE AND REBBETZIN

When the World War II broke out and the Nazis began to overrun Europe, the Rebbe and Rebbetzin were in Occupied Paris. The Frierdiker Rebbe needed money for their tickets to the United States. He wrote to Reb Sender in code, “Moshke [Reb Moshe Gurary] has a friend who is named after the Tzemach Tzedek and his wife is named after the Tzemach Tzedek’s Rebbetzin. They need to approach Berel [Reb Berel Haskind who dealt with visas]. Since it is now difficult to obtain visas, Berel

who is Moshke’s partner is acquainted with another person, who has contacts to help get the visas.”

The Frierdiker Rebbe entrusted Reb Sender with his personal and financial matters and gave a warm testimonial, writing about Reb Sender, “I hereby want to acquaint you with the dear person among people, a person of refined character. Mr. Alexander Rainin stems from a distinguished family in our birth land Russia whom I know for many years as an honest person, and trustworthiness in the fullest sense; everyone who will come in contact with him can rest assured of his spectacular reputation for reliability and sincerity”

IN AMERICA

When Reb Sender came to the United States, the Frierdiker Rebbe included Reb Sender in his projects in the U.S. In 5704/1944, establishing a school for girls was on the agenda. A meeting was called in the Frierdiker Rebbe’s room and Reb Sender was among the people summoned.

In the 5700s’/1940’s, Reb Sender was ill and the Frierdiker Rebbe advised that he be called up to the Torah at the fourth aliya of Parshas Bshalach which concludes with the words “Ani HaShem Ro’echa.”

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REBBE

The relationship between the Rebbe and Reb Sender began in Paris. As a result of their friendship, the Rebbe asked Reb Sender if he could suggest someone to fill out the entry applications to the Sorbonne University in French. Reb Sender suggested his nephew, Reb Boruch Gorlin, who also accompanied the Rebbe on his first visit to the various study halls of the university. In 5737/1977, the Gorlin family entered into Yechidus with the Rebbe, who asked Reb Boruch’s grandchildren, “Did your grandfather tell you what he did for me in Paris?”

Reb Sender would frequently visit the Rebbe at his home. Reb Sender recalled that during one visit he saw the Rebbe learning one of Reb Aharon Strasheler’s seforim. The Rebbe told Reb Sender that the Mittlerer Rebbe and R’ Aharon Strasheler were inseparable friends.

During WWII, the Frierdiker Rebbe contacted Reb Sender when the Rebbe relocated from Berlin to Paris. “When my son-in-law will come to Paris he will gener-



ate a new energy.” The Rebbe was once walking with Reb Sender in Paris and as they came closer to the shul, the Rebbe told Reb Sender “We should separate in order that people should not see us together. They will bother you with questions about me.”

LETTER OF THE REBBE WRITTEN IN FRENCH

In 5689/1939, the Rebbe wrote in French requesting an affidavit for Reb Sender and his wife. “I have a personal favor to ask of you. It relates to a dear friend of our family, Mr. Alexander Rainin who lives in Paris. I request an affidavit for him and his wife Silvia. They have money and do not need financial support.” These

“WITH THIS PERSON YOU COULD LIVE A REFINED LIFE”

efforts were successful and Reb Sender and his wife arrived in the United States. In the U.S., Reb Sender limited his visits to the Rebbe. When the Rebbe asked Reb Sender why he was not visiting anymore, he replied, “Here, you are the Rebbe’s-son-in-law”.

REB SENDER IN THE REBBE’S HOUSE

The Rebbe interested himself with Reb Sender in a very unusual way. After Reb Sender’s wife passed away, the Rebbe invited him to stay in the Rebbe’s home and Reb Sender did so for a period of time. When Reb Sender decided to move to his own apartment, the Rebbe gave instructions that two bochurim should live with him. One of the bochurim was Rabbi Moshe Herson, who stayed with Reb Sender for a year.

It was Reb Sender’s custom to stand during the entire davening on the Yomim Noraim. In his later years, it was difficult for him to stand and he asked the Rebbe what to do. The Rebbe advised Reb Sender to nullify his neder to stand during tefillos.

THE STRASHELER’S NIGUN

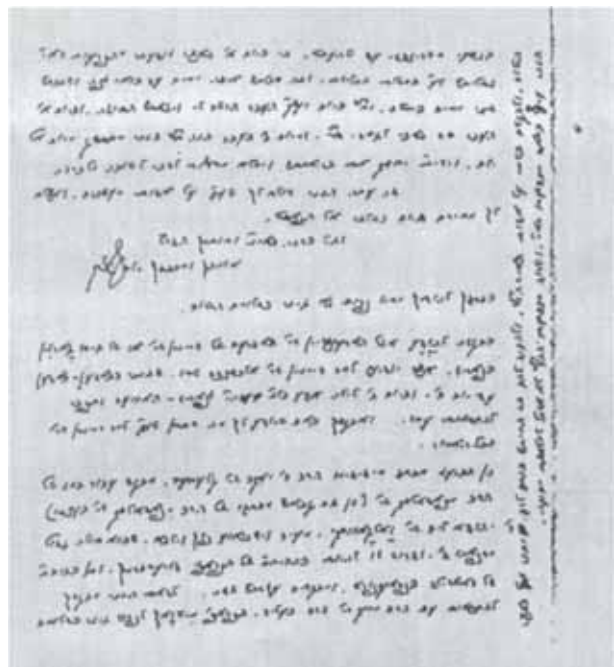
Reb Sender once asked the Rebbe why Reb Aharon Strasheler’s nigun was not sung at Farbrengens. The

Rebbe responded that Reb Sender needed to speak to the menagnim who began the nigunim at the Farbrengen. During the Farbrengen on the 12th of Tamuz of 5718/1958, the Rebbe instructed the menagen to sing a Strasheler nigun. The Rebbe then motioned to Reb Sender “They are singing a Strasheler nigun.”

THE LOST TREASURE

Reb Sender always carried a bag containing his notes of that he had heard from the Rebbe RaShaB. He considered these to be his most valuable possession and felt the safest place for them was with him. A short time before he passed away, in 5718/1958, he lost the bag. Reb Sender was heartbroken at the loss. On the 24th of Elul, he suddenly collapsed and was niftar. The levaya took place that same day. The Rebbe commented that it appeared that this painful episode took a toll on his life.

Yehi Zichro Boruch. And it should be fulfilled the prophesy, “the ones dwelling in the dust will awaken and rejoice”.. and Reb Sender amongst them. ■



A LETTER FROM THE FRIERDIKER REBBE TO THE REBBE IN 5689 ASKING “TO INQUIRE FROM HORENSTEIN THE ADDRESS OF RAININ”.