

The Life of a Chossid

Reb Moshe Yitzchak from Yasi

Born: During the time of
the Alter Rebbe
Passed away: First day of
Chol Hamoed Pesach 5621

Reb Moshe Yitzchak from Yasi¹ was a Chossid of the Alter Rebbe in his youth. After the Alter Rebbe's *histalkus*, he became a *mekushar* of the Mittlerer Rebbe and was one of three individuals about whom the Mittlerer Rebbe said "I accomplished with them all that was intended of them (אויסגעפירט המכוון)." After the Mittlerer Rebbe's passing, he became a close Chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek, who would say Chassidus to Reb Moshe Yitzchak privately in *yechidus*.²

The Alter Rebbe instructed Reb Moshe Yitzchak to remain awake all night every Thursday night, which Reb Moshe Yitzchak did throughout his life—even in his old age, and even on Yom Tov.³

Reb Moshe Yitzchak was one of three Chassidim who were sent by the Alter Rebbe to obtain *haskamos* for the Tanya from Reb Yehuda Leib Hakohen and Reb Meshulam Zusha of Anipoli. Only once they returned with these letters of approbation in Elul of 5556*, did the Alter Rebbe direct that the printing of Tanya begin, to be ready at the beginning of Kislev 5557*.⁴

When *chassidisher yungerleit* got married, they would often spend some time in Lubavitch, engrossed in Torah

and *avoda*. Following this time period, the Tzemach Tzedek would send them to spend some time with one of the *mashpi'im* whom he had put in place in various towns. One of these *mashpi'im* was Reb Moshe Yitzchak, who was a *mashpia* in addition to his duties as the *rav* of the Chabad Chassidim in his entire region.⁵

In a *yechidus*, the Tzemach Tzedek once asked Reb Moshe Yitzchak's son whether he remembered any stories of his father, who had by then passed on. After some thought, he said, "I can tell a story, but I do not know its meaning; I can only tell over the events as they happened." He began: "My father was once on his way home from the bathhouse on Erev Shabbos. As he passed through the marketplace, he raised his eyes in contemplation. Suddenly, he cried out, 'Bring me a chair right away!' People ran and brought a chair from a nearby shop. Wondering if perhaps his health had been affected by the hot water of the bath, they asked him whether they should call for the doctor. 'That's not necessary,' he replied. 'Just leave me here.' He sat in the chair for a half hour, his head resting on his cane and his eyes shut. He then gazed upwards again and went on his way.

"We don't understand the true reason for his actions," concluded Reb Moshe Yitzchak's son. The Tzemach Tzedek asked him for the exact date upon which this story had taken place. Upon hearing the answer, the Tzemach Tzedek smiled and said, "At that time, the *chupah* of the great *chasuna* in Zhlobin was taking place in the presence of the

Dedicated in honor of my wife
Rivka תר"ו
And my children
Menachem, Laya, Bayla, Devori,
Nechama, and Yossi שיחיו
By Danny Fishman



revered *mechutanim*, the Alter Rebbe and Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. The Alter Rebbe stood under the *chupah* and said the *maamar* “כִּי עַל-כֵּל-קְבוּד הִפָּה”⁶ and the *malachim* all gathered to listen like people gathering to see the rejoicing of *chosson* and *kallah*.⁷ Apparently your father also merited to hear this *maamar*.⁸

The Mittlerer Rebbe instructed that the Chassidim who came to Lubavitch should, on their return home, publicly repeat the *maamarim* they had heard in Lubavitch. On one of his return trips from Lubavitch, Reb Moshe Yitzchak passed through the city that was home to the *tzaddik* of Apta.⁹ As he entered the *beis medrash* and began *chazering* *Chassidus*, the *tzaddik* of Apta entered the room.

Reb Moshe Yitzchak was unaware that the *tzaddik* of Apta was an avowed opponent of the practice of saying *Chassidus* in public; in fact, he didn't even know that the *beis midrash* he was in belonged to the *tzaddik* of Apta. Seeing Reb Moshe Yitzchak, the *tzaddik* exclaimed: “הגם לכבוש את המלכה עמי בבית—You are attempting to conquer the queen with me in the house!”¹⁰ and proceeded to give him the terrible “*bracha*” that he would not live out his allotted lifespan.

Reb Moshe Yitzchak immediately returned to Lubavitch and recounted the entire story to the Mittlerer Rebbe. The Mittlerer Rebbe asked, “Did you G-d forbid [intentionally] disrespect the *tzaddik* of Apta?” “No,” responded Reb Moshe Yitzchak. “I didn't even know that it was his *beis midrash*, or that he opposed the *chazara* of Chassidus. I

was simply fulfilling the Rebbe's directive. When I walked into the *beis midrash*, I saw a number of Chassidim sitting idly, so I began *chazara*.” The Mittlerer Rebbe then reassured Reb Moshe Yitzchak that he would live out his allotted years. This did little to calm Reb Moshe Yitzchak down. The Rebbe leaned on the table for some time, and then said, “You will outlive him.” Still, Reb Moshe Yitzchak's mind was not put at ease, for the *tzaddik* of Apta was quite elderly at the time, and Reb Moshe Yitzchak was only in his fifties. Again the Rebbe leaned on the table and then said, “You will outlive his children.” Indeed, Reb Moshe Yitzchak lived beyond the lifetimes of the children of the *tzaddik* of Apta.¹¹ **T**

1. Some sources have his name as Reb Yitzchok Moshe.
2. *Beis Rabbi* p. 16.
3. *Reshimos Harabash* p. 129.
4. *Igros Kodesh Admur Rayatz* no. 4262.
5. Ibid no. 6171. The city of Yasi (Iasi in modern-day Romania) is some 400 miles due south of Lubavitch.
6. *Yishayahu* 4, 5.
7. See *Chagiga* 14b.
8. *Migdal Oz* 163.
9. This was likely Mezhibuzh, where the *tzaddik* of Apta, the *Ohev Yisrael*—Reb Avraham Yehoshua Heshel, lived for much of his life. It is also a waypoint between Lubavitch and Yasi.
10. *Esther* 7, 8. In the quote from Megillas Esther, Achashverosh is shocked that Haman would attack his wife in Achashverosh's own home.
11. *Chassidim Harishonim* vol. 1, p. 27.