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Lighting Lamps

The life and times of the Rebbe Rashab

In honor of the one-hundredth *yom hilula* of the Rebbe Rashab, we present the following overview of the life and times of the Rebbe Rashab.

The information was culled from many sources. For more depth on the topic, see: *Sefer Hatoldos Admur Harashab, Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab, Sefer Hasichos Toras Shalom, Toldos Chabad B'russia HaTsaris, Lubavitch Vichayaleha, Zikaron Livnei Yisrael, Reshimos Devarim, Sefer Hamaftechos Lesichos Kodesh - erech Admur Harashab, Ashkavta D'rebbi.*

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A CHASSIDISHER DERHER

“REBBE, WHAT IS A CHOSSID?”

The Rebbe Rashab answered the Chossid's question: “A Chossid is a lamplighter. The lamplighter walks the streets carrying a flame at the end of a stick. He knows that the flame is not his. And he goes from lamp to lamp to set them alight.”

Asked the Chossid: “What if the lamp is in a desert?”

“Then one must go and light it,” said the Rebbe. “And when one lights a lamp in the desert, the desolation of the desert becomes visible. The barren wilderness will then be ashamed before the burning lamp.”

Continued the Chossid: “What if the lamp is at sea?”

“Then one must undress, dive into the sea, and go light the lamp.”

“And this is a Chossid?” the Chossid asked.

For a long while the Rebbe Rashab thought. Then he said: “Yes, this is a Chossid.”

“But Rebbe, I do not see the lamps!”

Answered the Rebbe Rashab: “Because you are not a lamplighter.”

“How does one become a lamplighter?”

“First, you must reject the evil within yourself. Start with yourself, cleanse yourself, refine yourself, and you will see the lamp within your fellow. When a person is himself coarse, *chas veshalom*, he sees coarseness; when a person is himself refined, he sees the refinement in others.”

The Chossid then asked: “Is one to grab the other by the throat?”

Replied the Rebbe: “By the throat, no; by the lapels, yes.”

(13 Tammuz 5721)

No Longer Enough

“For 10 years,” the Frierdiker Rebbe quoted the Rebbe Rashab, “I deliberated about opening the yeshiva, and I visited the Ohel of the Tzemach Tzedek and the Rebbe Maharash often.”¹

The Rebbe Rashab announced the opening of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim during the *sheva brachos* of his only son, the Frierdiker Rebbe, on 15 Elul 5657*.

It was a tumultuous time for Russian Jewry. Some 15 years earlier, the Jews had been scapegoated for the assassination of the Czar and had experienced a wave of devastating pogroms, followed by a series of debilitating decrees hampering Jewish movement.

The Haskalah movement had been making inroads for decades, and Socialism and Zionism were becoming popular, making their way into yeshivos, shuls, and all the greatest strongholds of Jewish life. A common opinion throughout Eastern Europe was that Chassidus (and Yiddishkeit in general) no longer provided the answers to the challenges of the times (*r"l*).

The state of Chabad Chassidim was also in disarray. For close to 10 years, no Rebbe had actively served in the town of Lubavitch, and additionally, many of the Tzemach Tzedek's grandsons served as Rebbes in different towns, splintering the once unified Chabad movement.

In those days, Chassidim normally began to study Chassidus as *yoshvim*, independent older *bochurim* and young married men already proficient in *nigleh*, who chose to spend several months or years in the Rebbe's presence. However, many others fell through the cracks. Instead of making

the journey to Lubavitch as their ancestors had done in the hundreds and thousands, they were being pulled into the new movements.

The Rebbe Rashab felt it was time for change.

A New Type of Yeshiva

“When I shopped around for a *yeshiva gedolah*,” recounted Reb Shmerel Sasonkin,² “I met *bochurim* from Telz, Volozhin, etc., with shaved beards and large *chups*, who complained about their status as *yeshiva bochurim* and hoped to study medicine or law.

“In my yeshiva too, we paid attention to cultural norms in our dress, hair, etc. We were oblivious to the concept of *hidur mitzvah*. Our *tallis katans* weren’t the proper *shiur* and we hid them in our pants. All mitzvos including *tefillah* were done quickly and coldly, trying to save time for our Gemara learning.

“When I arrived in Lubavitch, I didn’t recognize my former friends. They wore wool tzitzis, and tefillin made by *yirei Shamayim*. They didn’t care about the world around them. And their goal wasn’t to become a *lamdan*; it was to connect with Hashem by delving into His wisdom.”

The goal of Tomchei Temimim, as evident from the talks and writings of the Rebbe Rashab and Frierdiker Rebbe, could perhaps be boiled down into several points: Torah learning in an atmosphere of *yiras Shamayim*, study of Chassidus that resembles the study of *nigleh*, *avodah primis*, and a fourth goal, equal if not more important: to become *neiros leha’ir*.

“The main goal and objective of Tomchei Temimim,” the Rebbe Rashab writes to the Frierdiker Rebbe in one letter, “is to strengthen the youth and



THE EARLIEST EXTANT PICTURE OF THE FRIERDIKER REBBE.

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protect them from heinous influences, to implant within them *yiras Hashem* and *ahavas Hashem*, and, wherever they are able, to strengthen Torah and *avodah*; to establish Torah classes in towns with the youth . . . to draw them to Torah, to instill in them *yiras Shamayim*, a desire to separate from forbidden things and to do mitzvos in actuality. This is the goal of Tomchei Temimim!”³

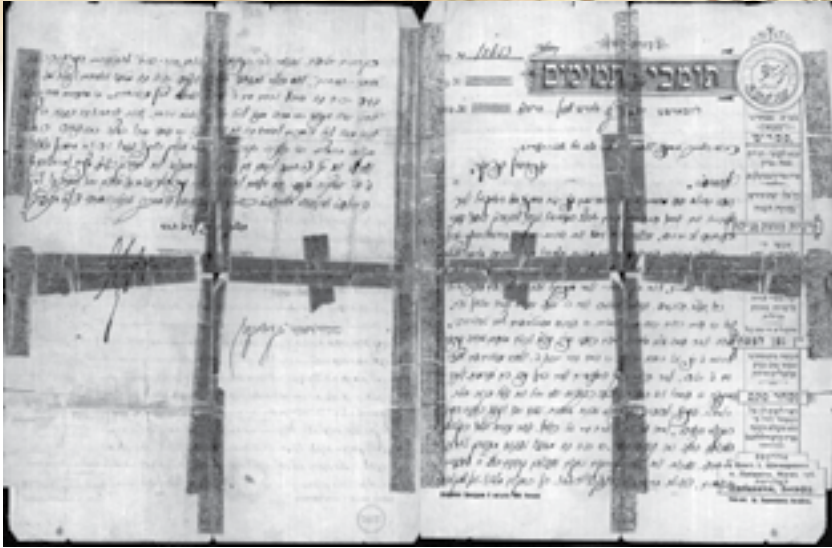
There were other yeshivos that sought to strengthen the *yiras Shamayim* of their students, but they normally used an approach of *mussar*, even the (non-Chabad) Chassidische yeshivos. Lubavitch was unique in the Rebbe Rashab’s insistence that Toras Hachassidus was as relevant as it was in previous generations, even taking

it a step further, making Chassidus a subject to be studied just like *nigleh*, studied by *all bochurim*, of *all ages*, for up to a third of the day (four out of twelve hours), something that had been previously unheard of, even in Chabad.

In another unprecedented move, the Rebbe Rashab wrote various *kuntreisim*, which can be called “manuals for Chassidic life,” defining in utmost detail the appropriate conduct and approach of a Chossid, which had been much more fluid and less defined by the Rabbeim in previous generations.

Exponential Growth

The yeshiva began with a small group of *bochurim* who were sent



A LETTER ON THE STATIONARY OF TOMCHEI TEMIMIM LUBAVITCH, SIVAN 5665.

to Zhembin, under the guidance of the mashpia Reb Shmuel Gronem Esterman. Another group remained in Lubavitch, continuing the format of *yoshevim*, under the guidance of Reb Chanoch Hendel Kugel. As the yeshiva grew, Lubavitch became the central branch.

During the first year alone, 10 new students joined, and over the next few years, the yeshiva grew by leaps and bounds. When the Rebbe Rashab said the famous *sicha* of *Kol hayotze limilchemes beis Dovid*, three years after the yeshiva's founding, over 60 *bochurim* were counted among its ranks.

Soon, classes were opened for younger *bochurim* and even children, and in its second decade, the yeshiva numbered close to 400 students. The alumni, widely acclaimed for their Torah, *avodah*, and fearless dedication to Yiddishkeit, began to take up posts as rabbonim and community pillars throughout Russia and beyond. The yeshiva was a very sought after destination for G-d-fearing fathers (Chassidim or not) who wanted their sons to grow in their Yiddishkeit.

"The week of enrollment made a deep impression on me," related Rabbi

Yisrael Jacobson.⁴ "Many *bochurim* arrived in Lubavitch, some together with their fathers. All the fathers spoke to each other nervously, hoping that their son would be accepted. The yeshiva was famous for only accepting students who demonstrated their willingness for *avodah* and learning. If a student was rejected, he didn't give up so quickly; he would begin knocking on doors, approaching the yeshiva administration, the Frierdiker Rebbe, the elder Rebbetzin Rivkah (the Rebbe Rashab's mother), shedding copious tears to be accepted; sometimes, they were successful."

The Rebbe Rashab's Chatzer

From the outset, the *menahel* of the yeshiva was the Frierdiker Rebbe. However, no big decision was made without the Rebbe Rashab's input, and he constantly received detailed reports about the yeshiva in general and *bochurim* in particular. *Bochurim* would consult with the Rebbe Rashab during *yechidus*, and he would give them detailed instructions in their *avodah pnimis*. Davening at length, for example, was something a *bochur* would engage in only at the direct behest of the Rebbe Rashab.

However, a *bochur* in yeshiva didn't get to see the Rebbe every day. As per the custom of most of the Rabbeim, the Rebbe Rashab remained in his home, and would enter the yeshiva only on Friday night, for the central event in the 'Lubavitch Court:' to deliver a *maamar*.

"After Kabbalas Shabbos," Rabbi Yisrael Jacobson said, describing his first Shabbos in Lubavitch, "a square enclosure was set up, and all the *bochurim* crowded around singing many beautiful *niggunim*. Suddenly, the crowd fell silent. A pathway was cleared, and the Rebbe Rashab entered and began reciting the *maamar*."

"I don't remember the *dibur hamaschil* or the content of the *maamar*, but the sight left a deep impression on me."

The *maamar* would normally last an hour-and-a-half. The Rebbe Rashab would begin in a low voice, but as time went on, he would speak louder and more passionately. After the *maamar*, he would make his way back home, and the *bochurim* and guests would begin *chazarah*. On Shabbos morning, the *chozrim* would enter the Rebbe Rashab's room to deliver a *chazarah* before him and hear his comments and corrections. Later, the Rebbe Rashab would deliver a written transcript of the *maamar*, which many *bochurim* would learn all week long.

On Yomim Tovim, many guests from all over Russia would arrive in Lubavitch. While davening normally took place in the small *zal*, for Yomim Tovim it would move to the big *zal*, which housed the yeshiva and was about four and a half thousand square feet.

The Rebbe Rashab would farbreng several times a year: On Simchas Torah, Yud-Tes Kislev, Acharon Shel



Pesach, and other unique occasions. Other farbrengens were held in his home, but most *bochurim* weren't granted entry.

There were other special events during the year.

On Rosh Hashanah, Chassidim would crowd around to hear *tekios*, and to listen to the Rebbe Rashab daven Maariv, which would go on for hours. The walk to *tashlich* at the river was one of the only occasions that the Rebbe Rashab would be seen resplendent in his *spodik* outside of the *chotzer*. Photographers from Vitebsk would attempt to capture pictures of him from boats, so tall *bochurim* were appointed to surround him and block the photographers.

Before Yom Kippur, groups would enter the Rebbe Rashab's home to receive his blessing, and he would read Maftir Yona during Mincha. On Simchas Torah, the shul was filled to capacity when the Rebbe Rashab and the Friediker Rebbe would dance together for the first and last *hakafos*.

Before Pesach, the Rebbe Rashab would lead a large procession to the river to draw water for *mayim shelanu* amidst joyous singing. He would also supervise the matzah baking, and visit the *bochurim's seder* after Maariv on the first night of Pesach.

On Shabbos mornings, the Rebbe Rashab would attend davening, but would himself daven very slowly, and would be holding before Baruch She'amar when the minyan concluded. On Yom Tov, however, he would daven with the minyan, and the *balebatim* were able to approach him and wish him Gut Yom Tov afterwards.

Yechidus took place three times a week, on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday, and the train to Rudnia, the closest station to Lubavitch, was

always full of Chassidim on those days. (Women didn't generally enter *yechidus*, and they would sometimes send messages through the Rebbetzins. Non-Jews were occasional guests at *yechidus*, but the Rebbe Rashab wouldn't speak to them in Russian, for various reasons.)⁵

Galvanizing the Community

"The Rebbe [Rashab] was the first Rebbe [of his time] to truly involve himself in activism, and he was also the first not to hide his opinion. Many Rebbes of the day were opposed to Zionism yet were afraid to express themselves, but the Rebbe of Lubavitch famously put out a letter against them, greatly provoking and upsetting the Zionist circles. Even those whom he upset begrudgingly respected his fearlessness and his leadership."

These words were written—somewhat surprisingly—by Yitzchak Shneerson, a relative of the Rabbeim but an outspoken advocate for Haskalah who opposed the Rebbe Rashab on all fronts.

"When the need arose to organize the religious community, the Rebbe [Rashab]'s decisions made a very strong impact. He was a famous and beloved Rebbe, known for his fierce fear of Heaven and equal good *midos*,

for his famous Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim and for his fearlessness in combating Zionism. He was a Rebbe who never traveled around asking for money, being a true *soneh batza*. And unlike most other Chassidic leaders, he was a talented communal activist and first class organizer, making him the acclaimed leader of all religious circles in Russia."

From the earliest years of his leadership, the Rebbe Rashab spent many months on the road, traveling throughout Russia for matters of public importance (as well as for matters pertaining to his own health). Those were trying times for Russian Jews, and there was a constant need for public activism to better the physical and spiritual well-being of the Jewish community.

On a material level, the anti-Semitic government issued new decrees regularly, tightening the Pale of Settlement—where Jews were permitted to live—and imposing other restrictions. On a spiritual level, the Haskalah and anti-religious Zionist groups were becoming increasingly organized, and, along with the government, sought to force secular education into the *chadarim* and rabbinate.

Opposing these matters came at a significant danger. The government



SIGNATURE AND STAMP OF THE REBBE RASHAB.



SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE ASIFAS HARABONIM OF 5670 IN S. PETERSBURG.

would often threaten to sanction pogroms if their will wasn't carried out, and great care was necessary so as not to endanger Jewish communities. On occasion, the Rebbe Rashab's personal safety was in jeopardy as well, and he was even once placed under house arrest for his efforts.

Through travel and correspondence, he was in constant contact with other prominent rabbonim such as Reb Chaim Brisker, Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky and Reb Yitzchak Elchonon Spektor, and many *Poishisher* Rebbes. He also made connections with major philanthropists from Western Europe, who were close business partners with the government and also major donors of the Haskalah, most prominently, the Barons Naftali Tzvi and Alexander Ginzburg.

Some of the projects were: Sending matzos to Russian soldiers on the border of China, fighting the Zionist activists, working against the rulings that tightened the Pale of Settlement, and efforts to create more places of Jewish employment.

A lot of the Rebbe Rashab's work focused around his opposition to the Maskilim. In response to the founding

of Chevras Mefitzei Haskalah, many Jewish leaders recognized the need to galvanize the entire religious community, and turned to the Rebbe Rashab, who orchestrated the founding of Chevras Machzikei Hadas to unite the entire religious community under a single banner. When his proclamation was sent out, 137 chapters were founded throughout Czarist Russia, and the organizations made an immediate impact.

The Maskilim also opened schools throughout Russia, where the teachers presented a "cultured" view of Judaism and gave the children a significant secular education. Due to the significance of the town of Lubavitch, they even founded a school there, to the Rebbe Rashab's great *agmas nefesh* (this school was the foundation of the Poalei Tzion of Lubavitch, a group of youth who were in perpetual conflict with the yeshiva). The Maskilim also sought to install, by government compulsion, non-religious teachers in the *frum chadarim* as well.

The Rebbe Rashab fought this campaign on all fronts. In the first case, he fought to stop the Maskilim's sources of funding. He wrote extensively to the Maskilim's chief

sponsor, Baron Ginzburg, pushing him to direct his funding elsewhere, and scuttled a major grant from the JCA (encouraging them instead to establish factories for the underemployed Jewish community). In the second case, he organized a wide group of Jewish representatives to promote the opposition, an effort which came to a height with the *asifas harabbonim* in S. Petersburg.

The Asifas Harabbonim

The Russian government held occasional conferences with Jewish leaders to deal with various issues of the Jewish community. However, the gatherings were usually attended by members of the Haskalah and dominated by Baron Ginzburg and others, who preferred to retain control over the proceedings. These wealthy and non-observant individuals were significantly detached from the Jewish community, and the outcomes, therefore, often didn't reflect the view of the mostly observant population, and didn't accurately represent their material needs.

For many years, the Rebbe Rashab advocated a gathering of the real rabbonim of Russia in a

conference that would be recognized by the government, where they would effectively deal with the issues and accurately represent the community's needs. Given the state of communication in those days, as well as the lack of interest on the part of the Maskilim and the government (Russian law forbade the gathering of rabbonim at all without government permission), this idea was pushed off for many years. Finally, in 5668*, the plans began to take off.

To ensure that the community was properly represented, the government arranged for elections to be held in each Jewish community where the representatives for the grand *asifa* would be chosen. The Rebbe Rashab immediately began an election campaign, to ensure that G-d-fearing rabbonim would be chosen over the Maskilim, who were running an election campaign of their own.

In most cities, the Rebbe Rashab was confident of his success, but when several locations seemed to hang in the balance, the Rebbe Rashab traveled there personally to ensure the success of his candidates.

In Chernigov, Yitzchak Schneerson was running the Maskilim's campaign, and the Rebbe Rashab arrived to counter the efforts of his own cousin. In Yitzchak's memoirs, he describes the scene of the Rebbe Rashab's arrival:

"The train station was besieged by thousands of people who came to see the Rebbe. The home where he stayed was surrounded by so many that it was impossible to cross the street...

"At the gathering for the elections, a line-up of the most prominent rabbonim and Jewish leaders from the area gathered together. But the height of the event was the arrival of the

Lubavitcher Rebbe, a man with a bold step, a keen eye and a *hadras panim*. His mere presence made an impact; we felt that we are in the presence of someone with a fierce determination and full of vigor. A real leader.

"I too, felt unusually inspired. It is well-known that even the greatest liar appreciates truth. Even I, far from being the greatest *yarei Shamayim*, felt uplifted by the presence of such a great Rebbe."

The conference took place in 5670* in S. Petersburg, and a "pre-conference" took place in Vilna a year earlier. Many of the most prominent rabbonim of the time participated, among them, Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, Rada"tz Chein, the Rebbes of Babroisk, Radzin and Sokolov, among many others. The Rebbe Rashab brought along his own contingency of Chassidim and rabbonim, among them the Frierdiker Rebbe, Harav Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, and Reb Mendel Chein. Reb Chaim Brisker was one of the leading rabbonim at the conference, and he supported the view of the Rebbe Rashab on all fronts.

One individual present, Heinrich Slusberg, noted the Rebbe Rashab's towering presence: "The Lubavitcher Rebbe had an immense impact on all the rabbonim. Though he was not so old, his every word captivated the crowd... He was tough as a rock on all matters pertaining to Yiddishkeit; he would not bend an iota on any Jewish practice..."

Many issues were brought up. The problem of Jewish employment, the issue of the many *agunos* in Russia, and the proper place and power of the *kahal*. The central discussion, however, was the government proposal that all rabbonim and *melamdim* be obligated



A BRIEF ACCOUNT BOOKLET OF THE ASIFAS HARABONIM 5670 IN S. PETERSBURG.

to acquire a secular education. At one point, a message was conveyed on behalf of Minister of the Interior Stolypin:

"If the attendees continue their opposition to the government's requirement of educating rabbonim in Russian, terrible pogroms will break out in 101 cities across the Russian Empire."

There were other rabbonim who subtly spoke out against it, but the Rebbe Rashab was the only one who openly took a bold stand.

The Rebbe Rashab asked for permission to speak, and he spoke words which would later be repeated by the Rabbeim countless times:

"...It was merely our bodies that were sent into exile and placed under the jurisdiction of foreign governments. Our *neshamos*, however, were never sent into exile!"

Passionately, he called on all the attendees to ignore the threats and stay true to Yiddishkeit. "Yidden!" he called out, "Be *mekadesh* Hashem's name in public!" and he fell into a faint.⁶



THE BUILDING OF TOMCHEI-TEMIMIM IN ROSTOV.

Upheaval

Over the five years following the *asifa*, the Rebbe Rashab continued to work to promote the decisions, and indeed, no new laws for the rabbonim and *melamdim* were enacted. Then World War I broke out, and everything changed.

“With the approach of winter 5676*, we were excited,” wrote Reb Yudel Chitrik.⁷ “Being that the borders were closed, it seemed that the Rebbe Rashab would remain in Lubavitch for the entire winter.”

However, it was not to be. As the battle-front approached the region, the Rebbe Rashab decided to leave the town Lubavitch. The house was quickly packed up, the large library the Rebbe Rashab had collected was shipped to Moscow (where it remains in *galus* to this very day) and wagons were loaded with the necessary household items and the precious *kesavim*.

On 17 Cheshvan 5676*, to the dismay of the Chassidim and Temimim, the Rebbe Rashab left Lubavitch, the cradle of Chassidus Chabad for over 100 years.

After some time on the road, the Rebbe and his household arrived in

Rostov, where they rented a home and settled in. Despite the dangerous conditions, the Rebbe Rashab immediately set out to work on new issues that arose due to the war. The government had banished all the Jews from the regions at the front, creating millions of refugees who needed material and spiritual assistance, and the army also wanted to draft all able-bodied young men, including rabbonim and *shochtim*. The Rebbe Rashab made several trips to Moscow and S. Petersburg (sometimes ending up in extreme danger in the middle of roadside battles), to annul those decrees and better the Jews’ situation.

New opportunities arose when the Czar was assassinated and a democratic government was announced. The Rebbe Rashab wanted to establish chapters of Tomchei Temimim throughout the country, and was also involved in the arrangement of a Jewish congress. However, a bitter civil war broke out, and soon, the Communist Bolsheviks overtook the country.

The situation on the streets constantly deteriorated. Unauthorized gatherings were outlawed, money and property were confiscated, and even

a portion of the Rebbe Rashab’s home was taken.

Reishis Goyim Amalek

“When the Bolsheviks took Rostov in Shevat [5680*],” writes Reb Berel Rivkin,⁸ “the Rebbe [Rashab] asked that Chassidim stop visiting his home [because such gatherings were forbidden]. Nevertheless, on Purim everyone showed up, each person thinking he would be the only one.”

Despite the danger, the Rebbe Rashab led an uplifting farbrengen and calmed everyone’s fears. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door; the Bolshevik police were coming to conduct a search.

The police entered the building, and approached the door of the farbrengen, staring incredulously at the illegal gathering. Everyone at the table froze in fright, but the Rebbe Rashab wasn’t moved. He didn’t allow anyone to remove the *mashke* or money (both contraband) from the table, instead declaring, “We will speak Chassidus, and they will be *nisbatel!*”

“He began saying the *maamar ‘Reishis Goyim Amalek,’*” writes Reb Berel, “explaining how the *kliпах* doesn’t exist in reality. Several times, he reminded everyone, ‘Listen to what is being said, don’t be afraid, and don’t look at them.’”

Shockingly, the police left without causing any problems.

On Motzei Shabbos, Reb Berel wanted to go into *yechidus*, but was told that “the Rebbe is unusually preoccupied.” Over the next few days, the Rebbe Rashab asked for many different *sefarim*. As Chassidim later discovered, he was preparing a *tzava’a*.

A week after the Purim farbrengen, the Rebbe Rashab began to feel ill. When the condition didn’t pass



quickly, doctors were called, and they determined that it wasn't the typhus that was raging through the city. However, to their consternation, his strength deteriorated from day to day. "The doctors didn't understand the concept of a Rebbe, yet they became very attached to him, just like the biggest *mekusharim*," Reb Berel writes.

By the eve of Beis Nissan, the situation was clearly dire. The doctors said they had nothing to offer anymore. The Rebbe Rashab spoke faintly, and Chassidim were able to make out various words and phrases from Chassidus. Suddenly, he opened his eyes, looked at the Frieddiker Rebbe, and said clearly, "*Ich gei in himel, di ksavim loz ich eich*—I am going to heaven, and the *kesavim* I leave for you." He asked to be taken

into the *zal*, where all the Chassidim had gathered.

For several hours, the situation hung in the balance. Chassidim gathered around his bed, sobbing and reciting Tehillim, and people donated their own years in front of the *aron kodesh*. For a short moment, the crowd was ushered out, and the Rebbe Rashab blessed the members of his family. Soon, the Chassidim returned, and the Tehillim recital continued.

Then, at around four in the morning, on ב' ניסן תר"פ, the Rebbe Rashab was *nistalek*.

A Just Cause

Three years after the founding of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim, the Rebbe Rashab spoke a foundational *sicha* about the task of his *bochurim*,

known as "*Kol Hayozte Lmilchemes Beis Dovid*."

The Rebbe Rashab said that their task in life was to be a torch of holiness for themselves and their surroundings, waging Hashem's war against those who fight Him: equally against those who *אשר חרפו אויביך ה*, and those who *אשר חרפו עקבות משייך*, spreading the *mayanot* of Chassidus until they reach the farthest *chutza*, like the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov.

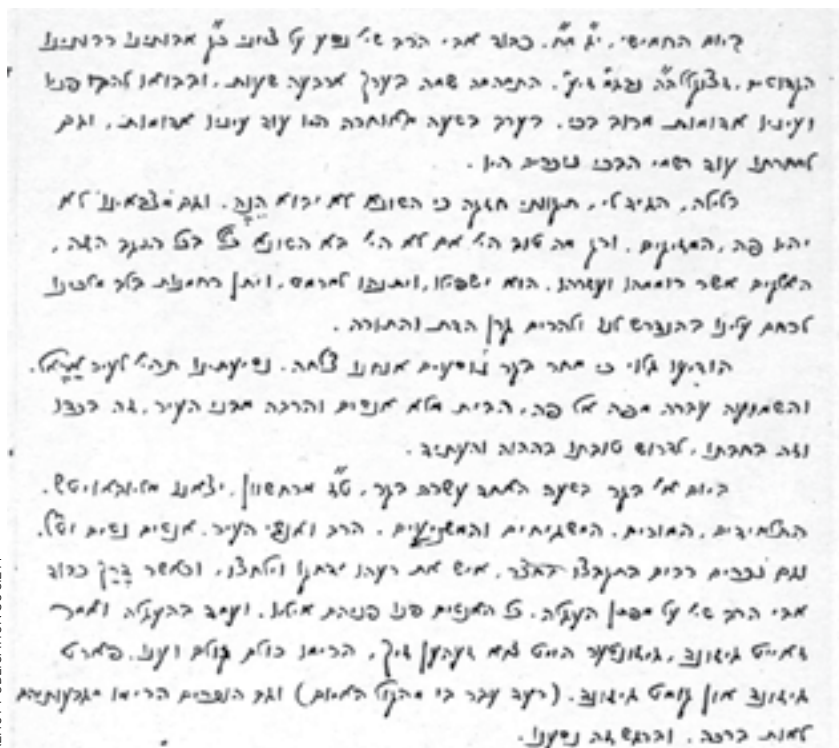
It seems that the "real" work, and the true test of character, actually only began after the Rebbe Rashab's passing, with the advent of Communism in Russia.

It was the Temimim and their families and students who responded to the Frieddiker Rebbe's call for *mesiras nefesh*. They created a vast network of chadarim, keeping the spark of Yiddishkeit alive, and they raised a generation of Chassidim, who became the nucleus for the Rebbe's work in *hafatzas hamaayanot*.

During a Chof Cheshvan farbrengen, the Rebbe once asked: Why is it necessary to recall that famous *sicha*, which was said to the "elite" *bochurim* of Lubavitch? How is it relevant to us?

The answer, the Rebbe said, is that it is indeed now the task of each one of us. The generation of *yetzias Mitzrayim* was loftier than us, but now their *avodah* has become ours. Likewise with the Rebbe Rashab; although the *sicha* was said to loftier people than us, it has now, in light of the circumstances, been passed on to become the task of every single Jew.

Every Jew is a *ner leha'ir*.



RESHIMA OF THE FRIEDDIKER REBBE DESCRIBING THE REBBE RASHAB'S MOVE OUT OF LUBAVITCH TO ROSTOV.



A REBBE'S CHINUUCH

In Secrecy

The birth of the Rebbe Rashab, as recounted to us by the Frierdiker Rebbe, was shrouded in secrecy.

It began with a series of dreams that his mother, Rebbetzin Rivka, dreamt where she saw her mother, Rebbetzin Sarah, and *her* father, the Mittlerer Rebbe, and then a third individual later identified as the Alter Rebbe. She was instructed to write a *sefer Torah*, and was promised a 'good' son. "Don't forget about my name," said the Mittlerer Rebbe. Under the guidance of the Tzemach Tzedek, the beginning of the Torah's writing and its *siyum* (shortly before the Rebbe Rashab's birth) were held quietly, in the Tzemach Tzedek's room.

On Chof Cheshvan 5621*, the Rebbe Rashab was born. On the evening before the *bris*, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka overheard her husband sending his attendant to tell the Rebbe Maharash that the *bris* won't be held the next morning. Shocked, she protested strongly, and after a few conversations, the Tzemach Tzedek

agreed not to send his attendant. "The *bris* will take place in its proper time," he said. But the next morning, the baby was declared unfit for the *bris*.

On the second night of Chanukah, the Tzemach Tzedek instructed that the *bris* be held the next morning in his room, with minimal participation. "The second *luchos* were given quietly, and in their regard it is said, 'לא ימושׁוּ, מפׁיך ומפׁי זרעך ומפׁי זרעך אמר ה' מעתה ועד עולם.'"

At the *bris*, the baby was named Shalom Dovber, after his two great-grandfathers, the Tzemach Tzedek's father Reb Shalom Shachne, and the Mittlerer Rebbe.

The child's upshernish too, was held in a quiet fashion. Upon the direction of the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Rashab slept over in his grandfather's room, and in the morning, he recited the morning *brachos* with him. He called in the child's parents, the Rebbe Maharash and Rebbetzin Rivka, and said as follows:

"The spiritual *pach hashemen* which the Baal Shem Tov gave the Maggid of

Mezeritch to anoint the Alter Rebbe for generations of *nesius*—with that power, my father-in-law the Mittlerer Rebbe was appointed, and I, with this power, anointed you (=the Rebbe Maharash) and I anoint him (=the Rebbe Rashab)."

A Close Connection

For his first five years, the Rebbe Rashab's childhood was graced by the presence of his grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek, who would often test him on his learning in *cheder* and tell him Torah stories. A number of fascinating encounters are known to Chassidim from those meetings, most famously, the Rebbe Rashab's question about Hashem's appearance to Avraham Avinu.⁹ (Some stories may have been passed down in *beis harav*, but the Frierdiker Rebbe noted that the Rebbe Rashab had clear and organized memories of his life from five years of age.)

On his fifth birthday, the Tzemach Tzedek called him in together with his parents, and blessed him. "The blessing from Grandfather," the



MAAMORIM FROM THE REBBE RASHAB FROM 1899-1902, PUBLISHED BY THE VAAD HADFASAS DACH OF YESHIVAS TOMCHEI TEMIMIM OF LUBAVITCH, SHANGHAI 5703.

Frierdiker Rebbe recounted hearing from his father, “put me in a different place entirely. He made me a *baal kishronos* (a talented person).”

When he was nine-years-old, his father the Rebbe Maharash began educating him with a *chinuch pnimi*.

“My son was never a child,” the Rebbe Maharash said. “Even during his youth, he was a *yarei Shamayim* and a *mesudar*, and he toiled to conduct himself in the ways of Chassidus. With the approach of his bar mitzvah, he was already a Chossid with a *mesudardiker avodah*.”

Even from a young age, the Rebbe Rashab was famous for his *yiras Shamayim* and meticulous observance of Shulchan Aruch. In a famous story, he once explained that before his bar mitzvah, he trained his body to automatically act according to *halacha*. When his bar mitzvah approached, he was already fluent in Gemara, *poskim* and even Chassidus (he began listening to his father’s *maamarim* from eight years of age).

When he was 15-year-old, the Rebbe Rashab married his first cousin, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah, the daughter of Reb Yosef Yitzchak of Avrutch. The wedding was held in the *kallah’s* hometown; the Rebbe Maharash did not participate due to his ill health, but instead recited 32 *maamarim* over the week of the wedding.

When the Rebbe Maharash passed away on Yud-Gimmel Tishrei 5643*, the Rebbe Rashab was only 22-years-old. Although he began to say Chassidus (as did his older brother, the Raza, for a short time) and accept *panim* to be read at the Ohel, he still refused to accept the *nesius*. During the year of *aveilus*, he closeted himself in the *yechidus* room of the Rebbe Maharash, where he davened, ate, slept, and studied, and he refused to answer Chassidim or guide them.

As the years passed, not much changed. The Rebbe Rashab would sometimes answer questions, but spent much of those years traveling out of the country for health reasons and for *askanus haklal*. The numbers of

Chassidim visiting Lubavitch dropped drastically; that period of time has been remembered as “*churban Lubavitch*.”

Seven years later, in 5650*, a slight change became evident. The Rebbe Rashab stopped his long journeys and remained in Lubavitch, where he began to accept Chassidim for *yechidus*. Over the next few years, the flow of Chassidim to Lubavitch began to grow once again, where they would come hear Chassidus from the Rebbe Rashab and enter *yechidus*. Thousands of Chassidim streamed to Lubavitch for the wedding of the Rebbe Rashab’s sister Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka and for Tishrei 5653*, the tenth *yom hillula* of the Rebbe Maharash.

On Erev Rosh Hashanah 5654*, the Rebbe Rashab spent a long time at the Ohel of the Rebbe Maharash and the Tzemach Tzedek. Later that night, upon entering the shul for Maariv, the Rebbe Rashab walked right past his usual place, and took the place of his father, the Rebbe Maharash. The long wait of 11 years was finally over.



A NEW UNDERSTANDING

One of the primary endeavors of the Rabbeim—if not *the* primary one—was the teaching of Toras Hachassidus, through the delivery of *maamarim*.

Beginning from the tender age of 15, the Rebbe Rashab wrote hundreds of *hanachos* of his father's *maamarim*, and he would also perform *chazarah*, the verbal review of the *maamarim* for other Chassidim.

When the Rebbe Maharash passed away, he began immediately delivering his own *maamarim*, even though he didn't officially assume the *nesius*, the first *maamar* being 'Keser Yitnu Lecha.' However, he didn't regularly submit them for dissemination. One *maamar* that did make waves in the Chabad world was 'Tanu Rabanan Ner

Chanukah' 5643*, just a few months after the Rebbe Maharash's passing. "Requests for transcripts of the *maamar* came in from all over," the Frierdiker Rebbe recounted.

After he officially assumed the *nesius* 11 years later, the *maamarim* began to be given out more regularly, but a truly new era began with the founding of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim. It was in those years that he began to regularly deliver the *maamarim* in his famous style. The Frierdiker Rebbe pointed to *Hemshech Rana*"t as the first such *hemshech*, delivered just one year after the founding of the yeshiva.

To get a better understanding of the Rebbe Rashab's *maamarim*, we turned to Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Gurary,

the *mashpia* of Yeshivas Lubavitch, Detroit:

"On several occasions, the Rebbe compared the Rebbe Rashab's Chassidus to that of the Mittlerer Rebbe. The *maamarim* of the Tzemach Tzedek and the Rebbe Maharash, in many instances, are replete with references to Midrash and Zohar, showing the depth of Chassidus and how it relates to all segments of the Torah, and 'uniting,' in the Rebbe's words, *nigleh* and Chassidus together. The Mittlerer Rebbe's *maamarim*, on the other hand, often focus on explaining the concepts of Chassidus themselves, speaking about them at great length and explaining them with utmost clarity.

"The Rebbe Rashab's *maamarim* have a very similar style. In his *hemsheichim*, he approaches all the deepest concepts in Chassidus, attempting to define the *gedarim* of even the most profound ideas, culled from sources throughout *primius haTorah*, going to the depth of each concept to reach the truest and clearest understanding of the issue, in a style that somewhat resembles the Rogatchover's approach to defining concepts in *nigleh*."

Interestingly, one of the only extant letters of the Rebbe Rashab before his





nesius—when he was 17-years-old—is a request for a *ksav* of a *maamar* of the Mitteler Rebbe, from the Chossid Reb Yaakov Mordechai Bezpalov. On a similar note, the Rebbe Rashab once expressed himself that his hair fell out from intense study of Imrei Binah during his travels in Yalta in 5646*.

In fact, the Rebbe related on one occasion, the Rebbe Rashab once found it necessary to point out his *hiskashrus* to his father, the Rebbe Maharash, because of the extreme likeness of his teachings to those of the Mitteler Rebbe.¹⁰

“However,” Rabbi Gurary points out, “in contrast to the Chassidus of the Mitteler Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab is also known as the Rambam of Chassidus. The Rambam isn’t only known for his utmost clarity, but also for writing *halachos pesukos*, for his decisive approach to the concepts. The Mitteler Rebbe might offer an explanation for pages and pages, and then overturn the entire concept with a few short lines, ודלא כדלעיל, as he often writes. The Rebbe Rashab’s *maamarim*, on the other hand, are written with a clear build up and goal and always bring you closer to the *maskana*.¹¹

“There is a fascinating *sicha* of the Rebbe Rashab on Yud-Tes Kislev 5668*, where he explains the difference between the Alter Rebbe’s Chassidus before his arrest and afterwards, known as ‘*far*’ and ‘*noch Peterburg*.’ The difference is less about the length of the *maamarim*, and more about their approach to logic.

“To understand the former *maamarim*,’ the Rebbe Rashab explained, ‘you need to be a *hechere Yid*, a loftier Jew,’ but the Chassidus following Peterburg is *mislabesh* in human logic; it is accessible to all.

Shiurei Torah

On two occasions brought in Reshimas Hayoman, the Frierdiker Rebbe recounts the *sefer halimud* of the Rebbe Rashab (later mentioned concisely in Hayom Yom):

He had two *shiurim* in Gemara: Two *daf* a week in *iyun*, and three *daf* each day in *girsra* ([a *daf*] after Shacharis, Mincha and Maariv). He would learn this *shiur* even on Yom Kippur during the break. He would also learn *poskim*, although not daily. “Choshen Mishpat with pleasure,” the Rebbe Rashab once remarked, “and the other sections *b’kabbalas ol*.”

Every year, he would learn the entire Midrash Rabba, Chumash with Rashi and also another *pirush* on the *parsha* (one year Panim Yafos, another year Bartenura, and so on).

Each day, he would recite a *perek* of Torah, Nevi’im and Kesuvim by heart, with an open *sefer* in front of him. He would also learn a *perek* of Mishnayos and a *shiur* in Yerushalmi while wearing the tefillin of Shimusha Rabba and Raavad and take a daily *shpatzir* among his *sefarim* shelves for an hour and a quarter.

He would recite Zohar, and also say Shir Hashirim before Kabbalas Shabbos during the weeks between Vayikra and Nitzavim. Pirkei Avos were learned slowly, sometimes a Mishna or two a week, lasting throughout the summer months, and on Tisha B’av, he would learn Midrash Eicha and the *sugya* in Gittin.

(See Reshimas Hayoman 24 & 26 Nissan 5691)

The Rebbe Rashab pointed out that this change was integral to the goal of *yafutzu maayanosecha chutza*, to bring Moshiach; ‘Chassidus was given so that everyone, even those who aren’t spiritually refined—meaning, the *chutza*—should be able to comprehend *Elokus* . . . and that began after Peterburg.’¹²

“It is striking that this *sicha* was said as the Rebbe Rashab was wrapping up the delivery of *Hemshech Samech Vov*, a very widely studied *hemshech* of Chassidus. As the Rebbe once noted, the Chassidus of the Rebbe Rashab in general, and *Hemshech Samech Vov* in particular, is unique in its utmost clarity and logic. In the Rebbe Rashab’s own words to his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe, ‘*In dem Yom Tov, iz altz faran*—everything is contained in this [*hemshech* of] Yom Tov [Shel Rosh Hashanah 5666*].’

“In comparison to the *maamarim* of previous generations, his Chassidus is far more approachable and understandable, and can be studied as an intellectual pursuit, and, to quote the Rebbe Rashab’s words above, ‘even by those who aren’t spiritually refined—meaning, the *chutza*.’” **1**

1 *Sefer Hatoldos* pg. 138.

2 *Zichronosay*, (new edition) pages 29-30, 38-39.

3 *Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab* vol. 1 pg. 318-9.

4 *Zikaron Lvnei Yisrael*.

5 *Lubavitch V’chayaleha*

6 For an extensive overview of this *asifa*, see *No Backing Down*, Derher Teves 5778.

7 *Reshimos Devarim* pg. 366

8 *Ashkavta D’Rebbi* pg. 5

9 Hayom Yom 9 Cheshvan.

10 Shabbos Vayetze 5740, *se’if* 10.

11 *Toras Menachem* 5742 vol. 1 pg. 209

12 *Toras Shalom* pg. 114.