



REB FOLLEH SPEAKS AT A  
KINUS CHASSIDEI CHABAD 5717.

of

לזכות  
הרה"ת ר' לוי יצחק  
ומרת אסתר ביילא ומשפחתם שיחיו  
חאנאוויטש



# Bearer Our Heritage

*Reb Refoel Nachman HaKohen ("Folleh") Kahn*

## Early Life

Refoel Nachman (“Folleh”) haKohen Kahn was born in Rudnya (a town near Lubavitch) on 5 Shevat 5657 to Reb Boruch Sholom and Slava Kahn, devoted Chassidim of the Rebbe Rashab.

Folleh once recalled the extent of his father’s utmost devotion to the Rebbe, that when asked to buy mattresses for *beis harav*, Boruch Sholom did not rest until obtaining the best of the best: a set prepared for the Tsar.<sup>1</sup>

A few years after marriage, the family moved to Warsaw. Around the year 5664, with his real estate business failing, Reb Boruch Sholom traveled to Lubavitch to consult with the Rebbe Rashab, who advised him to do business in Moscow. While he worked there, his family remained in Warsaw and he would visit them sporadically.<sup>2</sup> On 10 Iyar 5666, they had a second son, whom they named Michoel Yehuda Arye Leib.<sup>3</sup>

## Lubavitch

Reb Folleh, as he was affectionately called, wrote that he was five or six years old when his father first brought him to Lubavitch for Rosh Hashanah.<sup>4</sup>

At the tender age of eight, his mother brought her young Folleh to the yeshiva in Lubavitch. Rebbetzin Shterna Sara expressed her wonder at the prospect of such a young child living so distant from his parents and advised Slava to take Folleh into *yechidus*. Upon Folleh’s entry, the Rebbe smiled at him, inquired about his studies, and tested him. During the *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked about many life details, including if he sleeps in his *tallis katan* and *yarmulka*.

As they were winding up, the Rebbe asked softly: “Would you like to remain here?” “Yes,” replied the boy. “Won’t you miss your mother?” pressed the Rebbe with a smile. At that point, the child burst into tears and



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the Rebbe sent him out of the room, calling for his mother. He instructed her to return to Warsaw and penned a letter to her husband, stating: “Your son still needs his mother. If *chas veshalom* Moshiach won’t come in another two years, by all means bring him to learn here!”<sup>5</sup>

## Tomchei Temimim

Indeed, two years later, in 5667, young Folleh returned to study in Lubavitch. After a few years, he joined the branch of Tomchei Temimim in Shchedrin under the tutelage of Reb Shaul Ber Zislin,<sup>6</sup> returning to Lubavitch in 5672, just in time for the now-famous *hemshech* that began that Shavuos (“*Hemshech Ayin-Beis*”).<sup>7</sup> Young Folleh received a special *sefer limmud* from the Rebbe Rashab that included Tanya *baal peh*, which he mastered not long after. In addition to his study of *nigleh* and Chassidus and *tefillah ba’arichus*, Folleh was deeply involved in communal affairs too.<sup>8</sup>

Reb Nochum Guralnik related that young Folleh was a ‘*tziyur*’ in Lubavitch. One of his talents was

*negina*; he sang very well! At one *farbrenge*n, as a *niggun* progressed, the only ones who were able to reach the climactic note were the Rebbe Rashab and him. It was a sight to behold! As soon as Folleh left his *dveikus* and realized what was going on, he quickly became quiet. The Rebbe, however, urged him to continue, which he of course did.<sup>9</sup>

Reb Folleh described his constant burning desire to catch a glimpse of the Rebbe’s holy countenance. As such, he once snuck into a gathering of the *chevra kadisha*, which the Rebbe headed, and watched the proceedings together with a few friends. Another time they followed the Rebbe when he went to sell a few horses to the *goy* with the *chametz*. When the Rebbe noticed them, they ran away, only to hide and continue watching. At every opportunity, the *bochurim* yearned to see the Rebbes’ holy face, as if for the first time.<sup>10</sup> This was something Reb Folleh learnt from his father, as evident from his description of a bar mitzvah in Moscow that the Rebbe Rashab attended, during his stay for an

*asifa* (see below). Reb Folleh recounted that his father did not remove his eyes from the Rebbe throughout the entire event, carefully noting the Rebbe's every movement.<sup>11</sup>

Yud-Tes Kislev 5673, known as 'Yud-Tes Kislev Hagadol' — the great

Yud-Tes Kislev — fell out on a Friday. The *seider* was that the Rebbe would eat *seudas Shabbos* together with his Rebbetzin, Shterna Sara. Originally, the '*menagnim*' would sing during the meal but at a certain point this stopped. On that Shabbos, it was

restarted. The *menagnim*, Folleh amongst them, sang beautifully. The Rebbe's expression was serious, yet his son the Frierdiker Rebbe exuded great joy, attempting several times to cheer up his father. Together with the *bochurim*, the Frierdiker Rebbe sang a *freilicher niggun*.<sup>12</sup>

*At every opportunity, the bochurim yearned to see the Rebbes' holy face, as if for the first time.*

### Lift Yourselves Up!

Those who recall Reb Folleh throughout his lifetime relate how on Simchas Torah, he became a different man.

Later in life, when he moved to Ramat Gan, Eretz Yisroel, in the 5690s, it was in the Kahns' home where the main *farbrengen* took place. After a warm, lively *farbrengen* with Reb Folleh, the Chassidim began a long *tahalucha* throughout the neighborhood, stopping in each Chossid's home to *farbreng* for a short while. When they reached the main road, Reb Folleh stood up tall, stopped the traffic and began preaching about Simchas Torah to the crowds of people. Then he made "*kulehs*" in the street and all the Chassidim followed.

Even in his final years, living in Kfar Chabad, Reb Folleh did not allow his old age and physical ailments to stop him from rejoicing on Simchas Torah. He would stay in shul until the wee hours of the morning, long after all the elders of Kfar Chabad had gone to rest.

This started in his youth, in Lubavitch. As Reb Folleh related:

"When we were in Lubavitch, the first and seventh *hakafa* were given, obviously, to the Rebbe Rashab along with his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe. For these two *hakafos*, the Rebbe and his son danced alone in the center, while we all danced at our places around the sides.

"What a beautiful and holy sight to behold! The Rebbe and his son dancing in unison, the *shtreimel* on their heads, right hands holding the *sifrei Torah* and left hands folded over one another. The whole crowd danced and danced with such great joy, almost till *kelos hanefesh!*

"Whoever did not see this has never seen rejoicing in their lifetime!

"When the Rebbe Rashab finished dancing, he would return to his place, and the Frierdiker Rebbe would then be joined by the crowd of Chassidim in a dancing circle.

"Once, while dancing in this circle, I felt a hand tapping on my shoulder to the beat of the *niggun*. I turned around and saw the Frierdiker Rebbe dancing with closed eyes, murmuring the following words:

"True, the *avoda* of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, *nu*, we cannot reach that level. But the *avoda* of Simchas Torah, to dance with our feet, this we can all do! So dance! Lift yourselves up! *Freilicher un freilicher...*"

(*Shmuos V'sippurim* p.193)

### "Who is Moscow? Boruch Sholom..."

The Kahn family remained in Warsaw until Cheshvan 5675, when Reb Boruch Sholom brought them to Moscow. That Simchas Torah, the Rebbe Rashab had warned of the dangerous German Kaiser, a notorious Jew-hater, who had declared war with Russia and was approaching Warsaw. Some time after Simchas Torah, the Rebbe began a new *hanhaga* of sending a daily *pan* to be read at the Ohel by a group of 10 *bochurim* led by the *mashpia* Reb Shilem Kuratin. When Folleh's turn came, he received permission to copy the text of the *pan*, and he later published it in his *Shmuos V'Sippurim*.<sup>13</sup> That Cheshvan, the Rebbe himself left Lubavitch, which was close to the war front, ultimately settling in the southern city of Rostov, at the Black Sea's northeastern tip.<sup>14</sup>

Although the Rebbe had left Lubavitch, the *yeshiva gedolah* of Tomchei Temimim stayed there for another two years. Wartime communication between Lubavitch and Rostov was limited but both cities had open lines to Moscow. The capital city was therefore the communication hub between the yeshiva and the Rebbe. At a certain point, the tension in Lubavitch was such that the *hanhala* decided to dispatch a *bochur* to Rostov to talk face to face with the Rebbe. While passing through Moscow, he was to raise funds for the yeshiva. The *bochur* lodged by Reb Boruch Sholom, who, together with Reb Zalke Persitz, raised a sizable sum for the yeshiva. On his way back from Rostov, the

emissary shared that when he entered the Rebbe Rashab's room, the Rebbe asked: "How is our Moscow crowd doing?" When the *bochur* answered that the only people he knows there are Reb Boruch Sholom and Reb Zalke, the Rebbe laughed out loud and repeated several times: "Ye ye, who is Moscow? Boruch Sholom and Zalke."<sup>15</sup>

## Yiras Shamayim Under the Chuppah

Reb Folleh merited a unique and special care from the Rebbeim not seen with others. Prior to his wedding, the Rebbe Rashab instructed Reb Folleh that while under the chuppah, he should accept *yiras Shamayim* upon himself and for all his descendants.<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the Rebbe's father, Harav Levi Yitzchok, wrote something similar to the Rebbe in a telegram, based on the Rebbe Rashab's instructions to him on his wedding day.

## Asifas Harabbonim in Moscow

During the reign of the provisional Russian government following the revolution, a large *asifas harabbonim* was held in Moscow in Elul 5677.<sup>17</sup> The Rebbe Rashab participated in this summit accompanied by the Frierdiker Rebbe. The Chossid Reb Chaim Moneszson gave his entire house for the Rebbe's use, and Reb Boruch Sholom provided the food. His dedication was such that he temporarily dropped all his business dealings to focus on this duty. He spared no expense, treating the Rebbe like a king. After buying the best fish from one store, he noticed an even choicer one elsewhere and used that for the Rebbe. White flour was scarce at the time so he telegraphed his friend to send the best variety from where he lived with the conductor of the express train.<sup>18</sup>



REB FOLLEH, ALONG WITH REB PINYEH ALTHOIZ, REB NOCHUM GOLDSHMID AND REB YITZCHAK GANSBURG, SING THE DALED BAVOS AT A YUD TES KISLEV FARBRENGEN, KFAR CHABAD 5719.

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Reb Folleh recounted that together with another individual he tended to the Rebbe's day-to-day needs. This was after his marriage, and together with his wife, he lived in Alexandrov, a town some three hours northeast of Moscow. Their primary source of income was a grocery store which he left in the care of his wife in order to tend to the Rebbe.

Upon asking the Rebbe how exactly to go about *shechting* and cooking and which *keilim* to use, the Rebbe responded that the vessels touching the flame should be brand new, but those from the Kahns' home were fine for serving. Only cold things should be put in the host's utensils and *shechting* should only be performed by a certain *shochet*.

As far as dairy products, Reb Folleh's wife would watch the milking, boil the milk, and send it to Moscow with the store worker. This was a daily process and quite a feat considering that the journey was three hours each way. When someone else brought milk, the Rebbe turned it down. "Yet the Rebbe never even asked me where my milk was from," concluded Reb Folleh.

The Rebbe and his son stayed for only one Shabbos, 11 days total. As the conference took place during Elul, the Rebbe recited a *maamar* that Shabbos beginning with the words 'Ani Ledodi Vedodi Li.'

"On Erev Shabbos," Reb Folleh later wrote, "my mother mistakenly cooked the *tzimmes* in her own pot. When I informed the Rebbe and asked if he would still eat it, he inquired: 'Your family probably doesn't eat just any meat...' 'Of course not.' I replied. 'Only from *shochtim* and butchers whom we personally know to be *mehadrin*.' 'In that case,' said the Rebbe, 'I will eat it.'

"Aside from this incident, we followed the Rebbe's instructions to the tee. Ever since then, my parents had a special set of *keilim* that the Rebbe used. When the Frierdiker Rebbe visited Moscow in the years 5682-5684, he again used those utensils."<sup>19</sup>

## Rabbinic Conferences with the Rebbe

These *asifos* would take place at the home of the chief rabbi of Moscow, Reb Shmuel Rabinovitch, who was not a Lubavitcher Chossid. In addition to



the general sessions, the Rebbe Rashab would host smaller meetings at his residence with those who allied with him. They would discuss their position for a united front at the conference.

“Amongst those I remember,” wrote Reb Folleh, “were Harav Hagaon Harav Hachossid Reb Levi Yitzchok, the Rebbe’s holy father, of Yekaterinoslav; Reb Mendel Chein of Niezhin; Reb Shmarya Medalia of Moscow; Reb Moshe Madayevsk; Reb Mendel Gluskin of Minsk; Reb Menachem Mendel Schneerson, son of the Babruysker Rebbe; Reb Shimon Lazaroff<sup>20</sup> of Petrograd (Petersburg), as well as a secretary and several more individuals.”

The Frieddiker Rebbe would generally attend these gatherings, and on the occasion that he was absent, his father the Rebbe Rashab would thoroughly brief him of the proceedings. The internal meetings, on the other hand, would not be attended by the Frieddiker Rebbe.<sup>21</sup>

## Open Access to the Rebbe

Harav Levi Yitzchok also lodged at Reb Chaim Moneszson’s home,

sleeping on a couch in a room near the Rebbe Rashab’s. Folleh and his friend caught some rest on the floor.

“Late one night,” Folleh recalled, “I could hear the Rebbe calling me from his room: ‘Refoel! Refoel Nachman! Folleh!’ I jumped up, washed *negel vasser*, and approached the Rebbe.

“The Rebbe shared that he had a bad headache, requesting pills from his suitcase and some water. After helping the Rebbe, I left the room. I noticed through the cracks, however, that the light was still on. After a short while, I tapped at the door and re-entered. (This was my regular conduct, for the Rebbe once told me: ‘If you need to approach me, knock lightly and come in, without awaiting a response.’)

“I asked the Rebbe how he was feeling, and he answered, ‘*Nishkoshe* (not too bad), you can go back to sleep.’ As soon as I left the room, the Rebbe closed the light.”<sup>22</sup>

## Come and Hear Good Talk from Father

During these Moscow visits, the affluent Reb Zelik Persitz (Zalke’s relative) would often visit the Rebbe

Rashab. On this particular occasion, Reb Zelik was out of town, and only visited the Rebbe several days into his stay.

“I was the only one in the house,” Reb Folleh recounted. “I told him that the Rebbe was at the conference. He immediately instructed his driver to take him to the chief rabbi’s house. As the Rebbe exited at the session’s end, Reb Zelik offered to take him home in his carriage, which only seated two. ‘And him?’ asked the Rebbe, pointing to his son, the Frieddiker Rebbe. My father, who was standing nearby, exclaimed: ‘Reb Zelik! The Rebbe and his son will go in your wagon, and we will travel behind them in a hired wagon.’ That is indeed what happened.

“Upon their arrival, the Rebbe proceeded to his study with Reb Zelik, while the Frieddiker Rebbe went to his room.

“Suddenly, my friend and I were approached by the Frieddiker Rebbe, who told us to come and hear a ‘good talk from father.’

“Upon reaching the Rebbe’s door, which was slightly ajar, the Rebbe embraced and then leaned on us, one holy hand resting on each of us. We stood and listened to the Rebbe’s conversation with Reb Zelik the philanthropist.”

The conversation centered on the Rebbe’s sharp stance against the early Zionist movement, and using *lashon hakodesh* for mundane talk, which was being done in a yeshiva Reb Zelik was funding.

“When the Frieddiker Rebbe assumed the *nesius* some three years later, I recalled his great interest in the *temimim*. Who were we, after all, that he told us to ‘come and hear a good talk from father...’”<sup>23</sup>

## Return Trip to Rostov

“Prior to the Rebbe’s departure to Rostov, he instructed me where to put everything; which luggage should go

## Carrier of the Heritage

More than anything else, Reb Folleh became known to generations of Chassidim due to the treasure-trove of memories and stories he retained and published. So much of our rich heritage as Lubavitcher Chassidim was preserved due to Reb Folleh's many writings, published at the Rebbe's behest in various volumes.

## Shmuos V'Sippurim

The name for this *sefer* was actually based on a letter Reb Folleh received from the Rebbe. As is well known, the Rebbe constantly encouraged elder Chassidim who learned in Lubavitch to record all their memories for posterity. In one of the letters to Reb Folleh in this regard, the Rebbe wrote that he should record "הר"ד ו'זה שמועות וסיפורים מרבותינו הקדושים וכו'—The points, the things you heard, and the stories of our holy Rabbeim." Based on this line, Reb Folleh decided to call his collection שמועות וסיפורים מרבותינו הקדושים, including scores of stories about each of the Rabbeim and many events that he himself witnessed in Lubavitch.

## Lubavitch V'Chayaleha

A unique compilation by Reb Folleh published in honor of Chai Elul 5742—marking 85 years since the founding of Tomchei Temimim. Reb Folleh writes in the introduction of the *sefer* that the Rebbe encouraged him in this project as well. The book tells the story of the city of Lubavitch and its "soldiers":

"Those *talmidim* who stood on the front as soldiers of *Beis Dovid* for more than 50 years, many of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice, or were sent to Siberia, never to return, for standing bravely and fearlessly in preserving the embers of Yiddishkeit. Others have since spread out across the globe to promote Yiddishkeit and Chassidus."

This *sefer* includes many intricate details of everyday life in Lubavitch, and the Rebbe encouraged Reb Folleh to allow others to review the text for accuracy. Reb Zalman Shimon Dvorkin, the rav of the Lubavitcher community in Crown



FIRST EDITION OF SHMUOS VESIPURIM

Heights—himself a *tomim* from Lubavitch—carefully reviewed the *sefer*, correcting and adding details from his own recollections.

## Behind the Iron Curtain

Another special book by Reb Folleh "מאחורי מסך" "הברזל," tells the story of his own challenges of *mesiras nefesh* during the difficult years in the Communist Russia, leading to his ultimate arrest, interrogation, and years of imprisonment and exile in Siberia.

## Yud-Tes Kislev HaGadol

The thousands of stories and memories recorded by Reb Folleh are available for perusal, many also in English. Here we will offer just a small glimpse of how Reb Folleh relates a beautiful Yud-Tes Kislev as a youngster with the Rebbe Rashab and the Frieddiker Rebbe in Lubavitch:

In 5673, Yud-Tes Kislev occurred on a Friday, and it became known as the "Great Yud-Tes Kislev." I will relate some of what I remember from then:

On Thursday evening, everyone went to the home of the elder Rebbetzin Rivka [mother of the Rebbe Rashab], because the Rebbe [Rashab] would spend time there. The Rebbetzin sat and related a few stories, as did her son the Rebbe. Then we sang a few *niggunim* and stayed for a short while. This happened every year.

Reb Avraham Pariz (who would later become my *mehcutan*) was one of the older *bochurim*, while I was younger. We lived in the same quarters and he would look after me. That night, he told me that the Rebbe's son [the Frieddiker Rebbe] had invited some of the older *bochurim* to come to his residence for a *farbrengen* after the gathering at the Rebbetzin's home. He suggested that I join as well.



I came over to the Frierdiker Rebbe's house early, and the gathering at the Rebbetzin's was still going on. When the Frierdiker Rebbe came home with his guests, he saw me there and didn't say anything [i.e. he allowed me to stay]. He motioned to me to help him carry another table into the dining room. He then invited everyone to wash for bread. A younger friend and I had not been invited, so we stood on the side, but the Frierdiker Rebbe asked us to come to the table and offered us food like everyone else.

That night, the Frierdiker Rebbe said a lot of *lchaim*, and he invited the older bochurim to do the same. He was in very good spirits and he told a story of how he and the Rebbe Rashab were able to spend time in the booth of King Wilhelm of Germany in the Royal Gardens of France (each king had a special booth for when they visited). The Rebbe Rashab sat on the chair and wrote out a deep concept in Chassidus.

During *bentching*, the Frierdiker Rebbe recited "ועל הנסים" before the *bracha* of הכל ועל.

...On Shabbos afternoon, the Rebbe Rashab ate the meal in his mother's home, and a group of *bochurim*, including me, were invited to sing *niggunim*. The Rebbe Rashab was very serious, but his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe was in a happy mood, and he tried to make his father happy as well.

During the meal, the Rebbe Rashab said: It is obvious that the *Yam Suf* was not made of *marshke*. For if it was, there would be no miracle in the fact that it dried up!

...On Motzei Shabbos, the Rebbe Rashab farbrenge in the big *zal*. Reb Zalke Persitz had said some *lchaim*, and he wished the Rebbe Rashab, "*Lchaim*, you should not want to leave [Lubavitch] anymore!" (He meant that the Rebbe should be healthy and not need to seek medical remedies in other cities.)

The Rebbe Rashab responded: "Hashem is my witness, I do not want to leave! When I leave, it's like leaving my source of life. My life is to teach Chassidus and for Yidden to hear Chassidus..."

"Nothing can truly separate us from Hashem. Even *aveiros* cannot cause that. Only having poor health. If the body is not in good health we cannot accomplish anything.

"*Dovid melech Yisroel chai v'kayam*—we [i.e. the Rabbeim's family] are descendants of *Beis Dovid*, and his light will never be extinguished..."

The farbrengen lasted all night. The Rebbe Rashab left the *zal* at 7:30 in the morning. Then we sat down to do *chazara* and review everything we had just heard.

That day the Frierdiker Rebbe told the administration of the yeshiva to prepare a festive meal, but since everyone was still very tired, the *seuda* was pushed off till the next night, 23 Kislev. The entire yeshiva participated: the older students, the younger students, the *mashpi'im*, the *maggidei shiur*, everyone! We sang and celebrated very, very joyously. I will never forget that Yud-Tes Kislev!

(*Shmuos V'Sippurim* p. 132)

in the cargo compartment, and which he would be taking in the train car. I was to carry one suitcase, watching it closely until the Rebbe was seated, at which point I was to hand it to him.

"While I was arranging everything, a Georgian-looking Jew ran over and asked me in Russian where the 'Rostovker Rebbe' was. I pointed to the train-car around which local *anash* had crowded to bid the Rebbe farewell. After packing everything in its place, I too entered the train-car.

"The Rebbe Rashab was already seated in his place. Harav Hagaon Harav Hachossid Reb Levi Yitzchok, the Rebbe's holy father, was also travelling on this southbound train. He would disembark at Kharkov, en route to Yekaterinoslav. The Frierdiker Rebbe stayed in Moscow for an additional day. When I handed the small suitcase to the Rebbe, he motioned for me to place it in the overhead compartment. The Georgian Jew finally made it on, and it seemed that the Rebbe and him were acquainted with each other. He spoke in Russian while the Rebbe responded in Yiddish. He then proceeded to hand over many banknotes. After placing them in his pockets, the Rebbe slowly blessed him: 'Hashem should grant you long life,' after which he left the train."<sup>24</sup>

## Mesiras Nefesh in Moscow

In Cheshvan 5678, Russia was in turmoil. A civil war raged between the Bolshevik 'Red Army' and the anti-communist 'White Army' of the provisional government. Amidst all this, bloody pogroms were being perpetrated against Jews throughout Russia.

Against this backdrop, another *asifa* was set to take place, this time in the bustling port city of Petrograd. Upon arriving in Moscow, on the way





*“...My parents had prepared food for the Rebbe, and we delivered it to the Rebbe, bullets whizzing over our heads.”*

to Petrograd, the participants realized that they could not continue their trip.

Reb Folleh recalled: “When I heard the Rebbe was in Moscow, I rushed there from my home in Alexandrov. Meanwhile, my parents had prepared food for the Rebbe, and we delivered it to the Rebbe, bullets whizzing over our heads.”

### Photo of the Rebbe Rashab

After the revolution in 1917, Georgia<sup>25</sup> broke away from Russia and became an autonomous state. The Rebbe was in Rostov at this time and

the exiled Georgian government was working out of Rostov hotels. One of their staffers who davened at the Rebbe’s *minyán* on Rosh Hashanah, secretly informed *beis harav* that the government-in-exile planned on relocating to Turkey by boat on the Black Sea. The Rebbe and his family then began the process of joining the Georgian government’s escape, the Rebbe even having a passport photo taken (which is today the only known picture of the Rebbe Rashab<sup>26</sup>).

“The ship was prepared,” recalled Reb Folleh, “and many of the

household possessions were sold off. I was among those who assisted with the sales. Rebbetzin Shterna Sara handed us two quilts to sell and they were all set for the voyage.”

One morning however, the Rebbe informed his household that they would not be travelling after all. He added that no questions should be asked.<sup>27</sup>

### This, Too, Shall Pass

Following the Rebbe’s Rashab’s *histalkus* on Beis Nissan 5680, Reb Folleh was the first to give a *pan* to the Frierdiker Rebbe. Reb Folleh related:

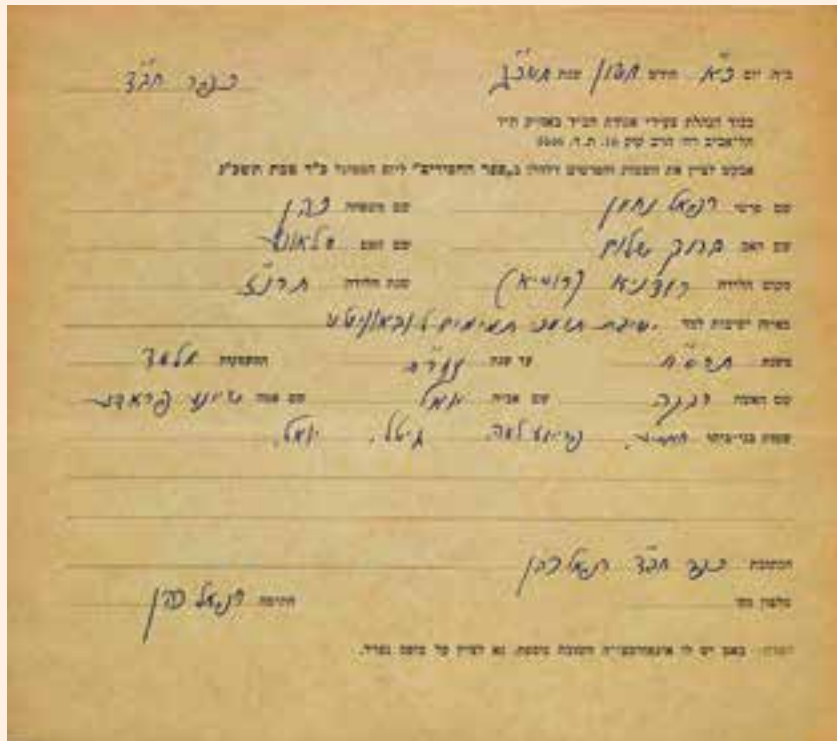
“I was absent during ‘*ashkavta d’Rebbe*’ (the *histalkus*—see Kesubos 103b) as I was sick with typhus. Moreover, immediately after



Pesach, my father contracted the disease, and I cared for him, despite my own weakness. The doctors actually forbade me from leaving my bed, yet I was compelled to tend to him, as there was no one else.

“My father asked me to write a *pan* on his behalf, and specifically hand it to the Rebbe Rayatz. This despite the fact that the new Rebbe hadn’t yet accepted the *nesius*, and wasn’t officially taking *pidyonos*.

“Despite my weakness, I made it to the Rebbe’s residence... After waiting a short while, the Rebbe asked about my father’s health. Despite explaining the situation and my father’s special request,



REB FOLLEH'S SEFER HACHASSIDIM CARD.

the Rebbe resisted taking the *pidyon*, stating that he didn’t intend to visit the Ohel at that moment...

“The Rebbe continued: ‘You’re still feeling the effects of the illness, and therefore can’t *tovel*. Your younger brother, however, is after bar mitzvah. He should go.’

“Reb Shmuel Guarary, a Chossid who was present, queried: ‘Why should a small child go to the Ohel?’

“The Rebbe responded: ‘What’s the matter? He is indeed a child, but it’s his son, and he should go.’

“Reb Shmuel countered: ‘Thus, a son is indeed something. His honor is his father’s son, and should take the *pan*.’

“The Rebbe motioned for me to pass it, and so I did. *Baruch Hashem*, the Rebbe took it from my hand. I believe

this is the first *pidyon* that he received.”

Reb Folleh recounted that following the *asifa* in Moscow (see above), the Frierdiker Rebbe stayed in the city.

“On our way back from the train station,” continued Reb Folleh, “we stopped to send several telegrams at the post office. The Frierdiker Rebbe then asked how I was doing, and how business was going. I replied that *baruch Hashem* my *parnasa* was great, and in fact, just that day, I had profited 800 rubles. After conversing a bit more, the Frierdiker Rebbe said:

‘An individual from an earlier generation had a staff upon which were inscribed the three letters: ג,ד,ז, the acronym for ‘גם זה יעבור’ – this too shall pass. That is to say, when one sees his *mazal* shining, he shouldn’t get overly excited, as it will eventually pass; the wheel of fortune will turn. And on the other hand, if one is *chas veshalom* suffering, he must not

despair. Rather, he ought to realize that this too shall pass.” (Zeide Folleh p. 6)

Fascinatingly: almost 40 years later, our Rebbe used this exact saying in a letter to Reb Folleh! Reb Folleh had expressed feelings of despair, and in addition to providing practical advice, the Rebbe wrote: “גם זה יעבור.” (*Igros Kodesh vol. 10 p. 263*)

## A Heavenly Sight

Following the *histalkus* of the Rebbe Rashab in 5680, Reb Folleh immediately connected himself completely with his successor, the Frierdiker Rebbe (see above).

“One day,” Reb Folleh related, “I climbed up on a tree and peeked into the Rebbe Rashab’s Ohel while the Frierdiker Rebbe was inside. I was met by a frightening sight: The Frierdiker Rebbe straightened his *gartel* and began shaking back and forth in concentration, just as he would while his father recited Chassidus. He stood there in this position for some 50 minutes, after which he nodded his head, as if to say, ‘Thank you!’ and exited the Ohel!”<sup>28</sup>

...The Frierdiker Rebbe said, “Ah! Gut! Folleh can also help us.”

## The Difficult Years

When the new Bolshevik government began their war to stamp out any remnant of Yiddishkeit, Reb Folleh, like so many other Chassidim, stood at the forefront of the fight to keep Yiddishkeit alive.

Reb Folleh’s address in Moscow was the one where all the secret *melamdim* in the area turned to for help.

After the Frierdiker Rebbe’s release from prison on Yud-Beis Tammuz 5687, he spent some time in Malachovka, near Moscow. Many of the letters for the Frierdiker Rebbe were received at Reb Folleh’s home, or his father’s, Reb Boruch Sholom, and they would send them to the Frierdiker Rebbe through a messenger. Although most people were not allowed in to see the Frierdiker Rebbe, Reb Folleh really longed to see his Rebbe after his liberation, so he took the opportunity to bring a few telegrams and letters over one Motzei

Shabbos. Seeing Reb Folleh, the Frierdiker Rebbe said, “Ah! Gut! Folleh can also help us.”

As it turned out, the Frierdiker Rebbe wanted Reb Folleh to help him on his final trip to Rostov, where he visited the Ohel of the Rebbe Rashab on Tes-Vov Elul, before leaving Russia.

## You Are Not Yotzei!

For Rosh Hashanah 5688, Reb Folleh traveled from Moscow to be with the Frierdiker Rebbe in Leningrad. On Tzom Gedalya, he was in *yechidus* and the Frierdiker Rebbe blessed him, “May Hashem help that we should see one another *gezunterheit*...”

After Yom Kippur, the news became public that the Frierdiker Rebbe would indeed be leaving Russia immediately after Sukkos, and throngs of Chassidim came to Leningrad to see their Rebbe one last time before he left.

On Simchas Torah night, the Frierdiker Rebbe handpicked the people who would be allowed to join his *farbrengen* (since the crowd was immense and the room was too small). Reb Folleh was one of them.



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE IN RIGA CIRCA 5690.

Reb Folleh later recalled that there were extremely emotional *sichos* that night. Everyone knew that the Frierdiker Rebbe was leaving Russia and people could only imagine the challenges that the future held. But the Frierdiker Rebbe promised that the physical distance would be of no bearing. At one point, the Frierdiker Rebbe picked up a plate of food and handed it to Reb Itche der Masmid, saying, "This is an 'eruv' to ensure that here and there are one domain." [I.e. just like an *eruv* can combine different domains into one, the Frierdiker Rebbe was ensuring that his departure would not cause a real distance between him and the Chassidim in Russia.]

On Motzei Simchas Torah, the Frierdiker Rebbe received people for *yechidus* throughout the night. When Reb Folleh came in, it was already after 3:00 a.m. The Frierdiker Rebbe told him:

"With this you are still not *yotzei*..."

Reb Folleh stood there puzzled, as he did not understand what these words meant. So the Frierdiker Rebbe explained: "I told you that we would see each other again *gezunterheit*. This meeting is not what I meant. We will still see one another later on..."

Years passed. In the meantime Reb Folleh was arrested, imprisoned, and exiled to Siberia. But the Frierdiker Rebbe's *bracha* indeed came to fruition, as we shall soon see.

## Arrest and Imprisonment

On 19 Sivan 5690, Reb Folleh was arrested and imprisoned. His KGB file shows that he was actually sentenced to death for his efforts in spreading Yiddishkeit, only to be miraculously commuted two days before the sentence was to be carried out. Instead, he was sent to exile in Siberia for three years.

APPLICATION FOR PALESTINIAN CITIZENSHIP FOR THE KAHANS.

Reb Folleh endured severe persecution and hardships throughout his imprisonment and exile, yet he never strayed one iota from Torah and *mitzvos*. At one point his family sent him warm boots to better weather the freezing winter, but he was reluctant to use them until he could ascertain that there was no concern of *shatnez*. Many of the stories of his immense *mesiras*

*nefesh* were later recorded in the book מאחורי מסך הברזל (Behind the Iron Curtain).

Finally, on 13 Tishrei 5694, Reb Folleh was freed from exile and returned to his family in Moscow.

About a year later, the Kahn family received permits to leave Russia through Riga, Latvia, en route to Eretz Yisroel.

Handing him a chocolate bar, the Rebbe said, "You analyze concepts very well!"

## Who is Jealous?!

At the farbrengen of Purim 5716, the Rebbe said:

Folleh Kahn made a farbrengen for Yud Shevat. [At this point the Rebbe turned to his son, Yoel, and told him to say *l'chaim*.]

When he reached the point of "טוב לב המלך בייך" [having said some *l'chaim*], he said that *ploini-ben-ploini* [one of the famous *rabbonim* of Eretz Yisroel who had recently passed away] is jealous of the smallest student of Tomchei Temimim for having learned Chassidus. Now that he is in the world of truth and he sees what Chassidus is, he is jealous.

All of sudden, the Israeli post started making huge profits in selling stamps. People were sending letters to me, one after the other:

How can one say such a thing, they asked.

This man was the greatest of the great, he was a *posek*, who sat and learned Torah his whole life! How can you say that he's jealous of the smallest student in Tomchei Temimim?!

So I answered them that this is based on a clear Gemara in Bava Basra. The Gemara says that in future times, Hashem will make seven *chupos* for each *tzaddik*, and every *tzaddik* will get "scalded" by the *chupa* of their colleague.

Why? Because he is not allowed in. The only Torah you are allowed to learn in the world to come, is based on the Torah you learned while here in *olam hazeh*. Hence, if a person was in opposition to a certain part of Torah, he cannot join in later on. While he lived on earth, he did not study this part of Torah, because he disagreed with it. But *teshuva* does not exist in the next world, only here in *olam hazeh*. So when he sees the truth of *pnimius haTorah* in the next world, and he wants to join in, he is told that it's too late. Obviously, he is jealous of those who have the chance to learn Chassidus!

While in Latvia, Reb Folleh really wished to stay there instead of continuing to Eretz Yisroel, as there was already an established Chabad community and good *chinuch* for the children. But the government would not allow them to stay on a transit visa, and so they continued to Eretz Yisroel. Unbeknownst to them, this "inconvenience" ultimately saved their lives, as almost the entire Chabad community of Riga was later wiped out by the Nazis.

When leaving to Eretz Yisroel, Reb Folleh and his family traveled through Vienna, Austria, where they were able

to see the Frieddiker Rebbe again, bringing the *bracha* to fruition.

## Meeting the Rebbe

At the time, the Frieddiker Rebbe was in Vienna for health reasons, assisted by our Rebbe.

When Reb Folleh asked if he can bring his young son Yoel with him for *yechidus*, the Frieddiker Rebbe said he should bring the entire family!

When they went into *yechidus*, the Frieddiker Rebbe inquired about how the Yidden were doing in Moscow and gave Reb Folleh a special *shlichus* to do in Vienna: To farbreng with



the members of Tzeirei Agudas Yisroel, and talk to them about the *mesiras nefesh* of the Yidden in Russia. About the exact time and place, the Frieddiker Rebbe said, "My son-in-law [the Rebbe] will help arrange it for you..."

When the young Yoel started walking towards the Frieddiker Rebbe, his father tried to stop him, but the Frieddiker Rebbe insisted, "Lozt im— Let him..." and he gave him a *bracha*.

Later, when the Kahns were leaving for the dock to embark on their journey, they were surprised to be met by the Rebbe, who told them, "My father-in-law wanted me to see you off."

The Rebbe struck up a conversation with Yoel, who was all of five years old at the time. Yoel told the Rebbe, "Meir Avtzon is the rebbe [i.e. the *melamed*] of the girls, Yaakov Maskalik is the rebbe of the boys, but the [Frieddiker] Rebbe is the Rebbe of all the rebbes!" The Rebbe was very pleased with Yoel's remarks.

Handing him a chocolate bar, the Rebbe said, "You analyze concepts very well!"<sup>29</sup>

## In Eretz Yisroel

The Kahns settled in Tel Aviv, where a small fledgling Chabad community was forming. Life in their new home brought with it a new set of challenges. The economy in Eretz Yisroel in those years was in its infancy and there were times when there was no money for basic necessities.

When it was time for Yoel to go to *cheder*, Reb Folleh wanted to have him learn in a *Chassidische cheder*, so he created one in his home! Never mind that the family of six was living in a house of two rooms. One became the *cheder*, while the other was the bedroom. The four families who joined the *cheder* each paid for one month of the *melamed's* salary, and thus the *Chassidische cheder* was born!

## Reb Folleh's Vort

In Eretz Yisroel, Reb Folleh's authentic *Chassidische neshama* was able to shine and have immense influence on his surroundings. Years of soaking up *Toras* and *darkei haChassidus* in Lubavitch and beyond would now spread out to the many others he would encounter through years to come.

Reb Folleh became known for his passionate farbrengens exuding Chassidische warmth and penetrating his listeners to better themselves in the true Chassidische way. No matter what community, Yidden of all types and stripes flocked to Reb Folleh's farbrengens to listen and be uplifted.

Decades later, at Reb Folleh's *levaya* which took place late at night in Yerushalayim, one of the great *talmidei chachamim* of the city, who was not known to have any connection to Reb Folleh in his lifetime, surprisingly showed up. He explained that some 20 years earlier, he had chanced upon a farbrengen of Reb Folleh at a family *simcha* and his life had never been the same since.

Reb Folleh was *zoche* that the Rebbe actually repeated one of his *vertlach* at a farbrengen and offered a deep explanation to his words (see sidebar).

## With the Rebbe

Reb Folleh first traveled to the Rebbe for the month of Tishrei, 5717. Throughout the month, he sent letters back home to his family detailing all the occurrences of the festive month in the Rebbe's court. The Rebbe pointed out that the relatively large number of guests who arrived from Eretz Yisroel can be attributed to the fruit of the labor of the shlichim who were sent earlier that summer (after the terrorist attack in Kfar Chabad<sup>30</sup>). Throughout the month, the Rebbe gave extra *kiruvim* to the guests from Eretz Yisroel and especially to Reb Folleh.

At the farbrengen on Simchas Torah, the Rebbe asked Reb Folleh, "Why are you so בכיוון?" Reb Folleh didn't understand, so the Rebbe explained: "I don't mean בקיבוץ, but בכיוון (downtrodden)!" Reb Folleh answered that the wine is not doing its job.

"Nu, take *mashke!*" the Rebbe replied.

The Rebbe poured a lot of *mashke* in Reb Folleh's cup, and "*baruch Hashem*, I was obviously quite *b'simcha!*" Reb Folleh concludes.

## When Is He Coming?

Reb Folleh lived to the ripe old age of 90. Throughout his whole life, he waited eagerly for the coming of Moshiach.

In fact, when the Frierdiker Rebbe announced "לא לתור לגאולה," Reb Folleh is said to have disposed of his copy of Tisha B'Av Kinot, with the certainty that he would never need to use it again.

Two days before his passing, on 17 Tishrei 5748, all he was heard saying

was, "When is he coming? When is he coming?"

Thus concluded the life on earth of a fiery Chossid, who lived with Moshiach all his life and awaited his coming every day. **T**

1. *Zeide Folleh* (Teshura Taichman-Cohen) p. 31.
2. Refoel Nachman Kahn, *Hechossid Reb Boruch Sholom a"h Kahn*, Biton Chabad 14 p. 32.
3. *Lev HaAri: The Life of Michael Yehuda Areyeh Leib Kahn*.
4. Biton Chabad 14 p. 32.
5. *Zeide Folleh* p. 31.
6. For more on this, see *Toldos Chabad B'Russia HaTsaris*. See also *The Chabad Shtetl Schedrin*, chabad.org/2529074.
7. See *The Marvels and Wonders of Chassidus: Uncovering the Hidden Treasure of Hemshech Ayin-Beis*, Derher Kislev 5777.
8. *Zeide Folleh* pp. 3-4, 29.
9. *Zeide Folleh* p. 4.
10. *Shmuos V'Sippurim* vol. 1 p. 120.
11. *Ibid.* p. 144.
12. *Ibid.* p. 136.
13. Vol. 1 p. 115. Printed thereafter in *Igros Kodesh Rebbe Rashab* vol. 2. p. 796.
14. Refoel Nachman Kahn, *Hechossid Reb Boruch Sholom a"h Kahn*, Biton Chabad 14 p. 33.
15. *Zeide Folleh* p. 33.
16. *Ibid.* p. 29.
17. For more on the *asifos*, see *Igros Kodesh Admur HaRashab* vol. 5.
18. *Zeide Folleh* p. 34.
19. *Shmuos V'Sippurim* vol. 1 p. 138 ff., 147.
20. Grandfather and namesake of Rabbi Shimon Lazaroff, head shliach to Texas.
21. *Ibid.* p. 142.
22. *Ibid.* p. 148.
23. *Ibid.* ff.
24. *Ibid.* p. 146.
25. See *Toldos Chabad BeRussia Hasovietis*.
26. See *Lighting Lamps*, Derher Nissan 5780 p. 45, that the Rebbe Rashab avoided photographs.
27. *Shmuos V'Sippurim* vol. 1 p. 171.
28. *Zeide Folleh*, p. 7.
29. As recalled by Yoel's sister, Mrs. Chasya Paris; www.ravdori.co.il.
30. See *Transforming Tragedy*, Derher Sivan 5774.