



לעבן מיטן רבי'ן



JEM 102917

טור 'לעבן מיטן רבי'ן' הוקדש לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת
ר' שמואל ב"ר יהושע אליהו ז"ל
ואשתו מרת שרה ע"ה בת ר' יקותיאל ומרת לאה הי"ד
ת"נ צ"ב'ה

ע"י בנם
ר' יקותיאל יהודה
וזוגתו מרת פעסל לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו
רוהר

Presidential Visit

MENACHEM AV 5726*



President Shneur Zalman Shazar was a close friend of Lubavitch and a Chossid of the Rebbe. During his many years in Israeli politics, he was involved in numerous projects on behalf of the Rebbe and Chabad in Eretz Yisroel, and he visited the Rebbe a number of times during his trips to America.¹

When he visited New York in the summer of 5726*, he very much wanted to see the Rebbe,

but this came with more difficulties than expected. Mr. Shazar had already become President of Israel at that time, and some Israeli officials felt that it would break protocol for the President to go to the Rebbe. If Mr. Shazar wanted to see the Rebbe—they contended—it would be more appropriate for the Rebbe to visit him.

As a result of this dilemma, when Mr. Shazar arrived in the U.S. (on a Thursday) he called

mazkirus to inquire if it is possible for the Rebbe to come visit him. The Rebbe responded that he will be visiting the Ohel the next day, and only afterwards will he be able to give an answer.

The next day (Friday) at 3:00 in the afternoon, Mr. Shazar received a telephone call from Rabbi Hodakov telling him that the Rebbe wanted to speak to him. The Rebbe spoke to Mr. Shazar on the phone, and told him that he was not granted permission by his father-in-law to go visit him. The Rebbe said to him in Russian: "I am no longer *balabos!*" i.e. it is not up to him to decide to go.

Mr. Shazar was still under pressure to cancel his visit to the Rebbe, but ultimately his wish to see the Rebbe prevailed.

THURSDAY, 11 MENACHEM-AV

At 7:30 this morning, Rabbis Hodakov, Mindel and Kazarnovsky drove together to the airport to greet President Shazar upon his arrival as per the Rebbe's *hora'ah*. (Rabbi Hodakov wore a *sirtuk* for the trip.)

MOTZEI SHABBOS PARSHAS VA'ESCHANAN, 13 MENACHEM-AV

Already before Maariv, police arrived to prepare the area outside 770 in anticipation for the important visitor coming to see the Rebbe tonight. The tumult grew as a crowd began to form in front of 770, and more and more people began to arrive, hoping to catch a glimpse of this momentous and historical meeting between the Rebbe and Mr. Shazar, the President of Israel at the time.

The Rebbe came into the shul for Maariv at 9:00 p.m. After Maariv, the commotion and frantic preparations began in earnest: Members from the Shin Bet (Israeli Security Agency) and officials from the Israeli Consulate in Manhattan arrived at 770, and at 10:00 p.m. Rabbi Hodakov was asked to provide an (estimated) schedule for the evening. Everyone was asked to vacate the Merkos office, and Rabbi Hodakov spoke alone with a representative of the Israeli security team.

Meanwhile, Reb Shmuel Levitin and Reb Moshe Leib Rodshtein went into the Rebbe's room and they were instructed to go—together with Reb Itche Goldin and some other Chassidim—to the hotel where President Shazar was staying.



CROWDS GATHER OUTSIDE 770



MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SHAZAR AT HIS HOTEL ROOM. R-L REB MOSHE LEIB RODSHTEN, REB SHMUEL LEVITIN, PRESIDENT SHAZAR, REB ITCHE GOLDIN

More police arrived and Rabbi Hodakov instructed that everyone leave the building of 770. Whoever was still there went outside, including those working in the Merkos office. Police positioned themselves in front of the entrance to keep the area under surveillance. There were police personnel stationed in the *chatzer* outside the *zal* too. Inside, the *zal* was arranged to welcome the President and his entourage when they would arrive.

Accompanied by the delegation of distinguished Chassidim who had come to greet him, Mr. Shazar set out from his hotel. Whilst the motorcade led by a police escort sped through the streets of New York City, Mr. Shazar farbrenged and chatted with the delegation of Chassidim.

The crowd standing outside 770 was estimated by police to be around 4,000 people.

Minutes before President Shazar arrived at 770, Rabbi Hodakov came outside and asked that when the car arrives, Chassidim should sing Napoleon's march to greet him.

At 11:30 p.m., the President and his entourage—a procession of about 10 cars—pulled up in front of 770. Rabbi Groner immediately notified the Rebbe of their arrival, and the Rebbe made his way towards the entrance of 770.

President Shazar stepped out of his car and walked up the pathway towards the front door where the Rebbe was waiting to greet him. When Mr. Shazar finally reached the Rebbe, they kissed and embraced each other. Shazar—completely overwhelmed with emotion—grasped the Rebbe's beard with his hand, and cried out, "Rebbe, Rebbe!" his face white from excitement.

Holding Mr. Shazar's arm, the Rebbe walked with him into the *zal*, where the president kissed the *paroches* on the *aron kodesh*. He then introduced to the Rebbe the officials and diplomats who accompanied him on the visit.

Afterwards, the Rebbe walked together with Mr. Shazar through the hallway towards his room, and along with Mr. Shazar's entire entourage and a few Chassidim, they entered the Rebbe's room. There

was hardly any space in the room due to the large number of people present.

When Mr. Shazar entered the Rebbe's room, the Rebbe pointed to his table and said: "By this very table, many Jews poured their hearts out—and this I couldn't bring along if I would make the visit!"²

Everyone settled down, and Mr. Shazar began by asking the Rebbe about the *halacha* of making a "*shehecheyanu*" (upon seeing a friend after a long period of time). This led to a short discussion on the topic, and the Rebbe went into various details regarding an instance when someone sees a friend for the first time after 30 days, and when the two friends corresponded with each other through sending letters to one another.

Mr. Shazar proudly informed the Rebbe that he is still keeping the *shiurim* in *nigleh* and Chassidus which the Rebbe had instructed him to start the last time he was here, and he specified the names of the participants in his *shiur*. He also spoke about the big *koch* being made for young children to learn Chassidus.



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He shared with the Rebbe about his desire to go to a place where there is a set schedule for learning Chassidus, but that due to his position as president he was unable to do so until now. Now however, construction for the new “Presidential Residence” was underway, and the location was right across the street from a shul in which there is a set *kvius* for learning Chassidus!

At some point during their conversation, the Rebbe presented Mr. Shazar with a newly printed *kuntres* containing a *maamar* from the Rebbe Maharash on the *possuk* “נחמו נחמו עמי”, which was said exactly 100 years earlier, in the year 5626* (תרכ”ו). The Rebbe told him that the *maamar* was printed especially in honor of the visit, and that the *kuntres* he is receiving is the very first copy. The Rebbe also wrote a personal note on the *kuntres* before presenting it to him.

Mr. Shazar told the Rebbe that he also brought him a gift, and the Rebbe said to him that he will take a look at it later in the *yechidus*.

Mr. Shazar commented about the fact that there are those who exhibit a hostile attitude towards

Eretz Yisroel (and he mentioned the names of certain individuals)—but the Rebbe displays love for Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe responded that deep down, they too possess a love for Eretz Yisroel.

Mr. Shazar’s personal doctor had come along with him on this visit, and during the *yechidus* he voiced his concern that the meeting should not go on for too long so as not to put too much strain on him, which could adversely affect his health... The Rebbe interjected, “We are not discussing personal matters here; we are speaking about matters that have to do with thousands of Yidden!”

The Rebbe then said to Mr. Shazar that even though he is only a representative of *anash*, nevertheless, being that his father-in-law the Frieddiker Rebbe had tremendous *mesiras nefesh* on behalf of Russian Jewry, the outcome of their discussion will certainly hold some benefit for the Russian Jews.

After about a half hour of talking, Reb Shmuel Levitin commented that Mr. Shazar would probably like to speak with the Rebbe in private as well. At this point, everyone in the room left, and Mr.



ENTERING THE ZAL

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THE REBBE PRESENTS PRESIDENT SHAZAR
WITH THE KUNTRES NACHAMU NACHAMU
AMI FROM THE REBBE MAHARASHI

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Shazar and the Rebbe were left to speak in private. Mr. Shazar removed his hat and replaced it with a large, black *yarmulke*. During the *yeichidus*, coffee was served.

Mr. Shazar presented the Rebbe with a small wooden box containing *kisvei yad*—handwritten manuscripts—from the Rebbe Rashab. These manuscripts had been in the possession of the Friediker Rebbe and were lost during the Holocaust. Later they were found at the municipal library in Warsaw and eventually made their way to Eretz Yisroel.

The doctor had said that the *yeichidus* should not go on past 1:10 a.m. The *yeichidus* began at 11:40 p.m.; after about a half hour everyone else left the room, and Mr. Shazar stayed alone with the Rebbe until 1:20 a.m., at which time photographers came into the room to take pictures and at 1:40 a.m. Shazar came out of the Rebbe's room.

After leaving the room, he went straight to the Merkos office where he was broadcast live on Israeli radio through the station *Kol Yisrael*. Mr. Shazar said that he is speaking now from the Rebbe's house, and that he had just come out from the Rebbe's room where he had a very heartwarming and genuine discussion with the Rebbe in which they discussed important and timely matters concerning—not only the fate of those living in Eretz Yisroel—but the fate of world Jewry as a whole. He expressed how extremely grateful he is to the Rebbe for giving him so much of his time... “And I must stop now, for the Rebbe has left his room to escort me...”

The Rebbe escorted Mr. Shazar to his car while they continued speaking along the way. The Rebbe wished a “*gut voch*” to Mr. Shazar, who then got into his car along with Rabbi Hodakov and a few other Chassidim who accompanied him back to his hotel. (Rabbi Krinsky also drove to the hotel in a separate car together with a few elder Chassidim.)

The whole time, police were protecting the Rebbe from the large crowds, and when the Rebbe turned to go back inside, two police officers escorted the Rebbe to the front door of 770 while holding his arms. The Rebbe thanked them and returned to his room.

The Rebbetzin went into the Rebbe's room and was there for about a half hour. The Rebbe left 770 to go home at 2:30 a.m., and a half hour later, the Chassidim who had escorted Mr. Shazar to his hotel returned. Rabbi Hodakov, who had also gone along

to the hotel, went into his office to call the Rebbe's home and give a report of the trip to the hotel.

After Mr. Shazar returned to Eretz Yisroel, he shared interesting details³ surrounding his visit to the Rebbe with Rabbi Ezriel Zelig Slonim:

“The Rebbe showed me the place where the Friediker Rebbe rejoiced on Simchas Torah and wept on Tisha B'av, saying, ‘This I couldn't have brought to you.’

“The Rebbe also told my escorts, ‘In this room, tens of thousands of Yidden received guidance and strength. This is why our meeting must take place here.’”

After Mr. Shazar returned to Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe sent him a letter to greet him upon his arrival. “I want to once again express my heartfelt thanks and the great satisfaction and *nachas-ruach* you brought me with the precious gift...

“Of course, I appreciate from the depth of my heart the great pleasure you afforded me by coming for another face-to-face visit and for the opportunity to speak with you privately; even though the allotted time we had did not at all reflect the importance of the subjects we spoke about, and certainly not all the subjects we didn't yet speak about. We will, in due time, correspond about these issues in writing...”⁴ **T**

1. See *A Purim Guest*, Derher Adar II 5774.

2. Nossi V'Chossid p. 257.

3. Kfar Chabad 505, p. 39.

4. 17 Menachem-Av 5727.



PRESIDENT SHAZAR BROADCASTS ON KOL YISRAEL RADIO FROM THE MERKOS OFFICE