



*The Friediker Rebbe relates some of his memories from the year 5669. At that time in his life he was working closely with his father, the Rebbe Rashab, as his personal secretary. In his unique way, the Friediker Rebbe paints a picture of what it was to be a Yid in Russia and specifically a Chossid. Although nothing can substitute for the original, we have attempted to take you on that journey as well.*

This segment is titled:

# The Approach of a Chossid

**M**y father's work in the year 5669 was one of outstanding importance, including his efforts on behalf of Jewry at large.

In the month of Cheshvan a secret meeting took place in Lubavitch and my father presided over it. The participants were a number of rabbanim, as well as some wealthy businessmen with a sound grasp of communal endeavors. The objective was to hear and discuss a report involving several weighty issues.

Since I was my father's personal secretary, the coordinator of the office, and one of its five active workers, I was directed by my father to familiarize the attendees with the following three primary issues: (a) how to organize the ground-work and the elections for the forthcoming rabbinical conference; (b) the manner and extent of our involvement in the preparations and elections for the forthcoming Duma, the Russian parliament; and (c) amendments to the regulations that had been instituted by the rabbanim of Germany, led by HaRav Breuer, for Machzikei HaDas, the organization that my father had left two years earlier.

The meeting lasted for five days, in the course of which decisions were reached on all the above subjects. The necessary budget was drawn up and the office was charged with carrying all these decisions through.

## A Difficult Winter

The winter months were spent dealing with the above tasks, as well as in routine representations in government

circles on questions involving the economic situation of Russian Jewry.

My father spent the last three winter months in various health spas abroad, and during his stay in Germany he discussed the platform of Machzikei HaDas with rabbanim and communal activists. Those several weeks of exertion weakened my father considerably, so he was compelled to extend his stay abroad by several days.

Finally, on Wednesday morning, the ninth of Nissan, we left Berlin via Koenigsburg, Dvinsk, Vitebsk and Rudny, and at 6:00 on Thursday evening, the tenth of Nissan, we arrived at Lubavitch.

As we drove through a few of the Jewish streets of the township of Rudny we saw tables and benches outside every house, some already washed, some being washed. In the streets where gentiles lived there was nothing of this activity to be seen.

As we drove out of the town, taking the road to Lubavitch, my father said: "I will tell you a story that I heard from my father some 30 or 32 years ago."

*At this point in his diary, the Friediker Rebbe pauses with the story and explains what he heard then, that every story has to contain a lesson in avodah. He then goes on to detail the lesson they took from the incident and then continues with the story:*

## From Shul to Shul

Here, then, is the story, as my grandfather told it to my father.

When I was in Marienbad I decided that I would travel home via Vienna and Warsaw, visiting Berditchev on the way. The entire trip was to be without anyone's knowledge, aside for Reb Pinchas Leib (the assistant *gabbai* of the Rebbe Maharash), who would accompany me throughout.

Arriving in Berditchev very early in the morning, I drove to a hotel, davened *shacharis*, and went to the resting place of the Rav of Berditchev.

When I left the Ohel I went to see the *shtiblach* of the local Poilisher Chassidim. In the first little shul I visited I found quite a number of people sitting and studying, while others were indulging in the conversation of Chassidim or

exchanging stories. From there I went on to a second and third *shtibel*, everywhere finding old and young alike studying and likewise spending their time in positive talk.

This went on for quite some time, as I wandered from one *kloiz* to the next. I engaged a few individuals here and there in conversation—some of them elder Chassidim, some of them younger—asking them questions about whatever they happened to be studying at the time, and often receiving answers that showed me they had a firm grasp of their subject.

I was about to return to my hotel to rest, for there remained a few hours until my train was due to depart, when I caught sight of several elderly

Chassidim with white beards. Though it was not a warm day, their long coats were tucked up, and on their feet they wore nothing more than shoes and socks. They were carrying a big bucket of water, and talking excitedly. This scene attracted my interest: I could tell that these were no common water-carriers. Moreover, as they walked, the younger people who accompanied them kept on offering to carry the bucket instead of them, but were constantly refused.

After quite a long walk they turned into an alley, where a few houses down I saw several elderly men who had taken off the long black coats that usually covered their *tzitzis*; they had rolled up their sleeves, and were

AN ANCIENT SHUL IN BARDICHEV.

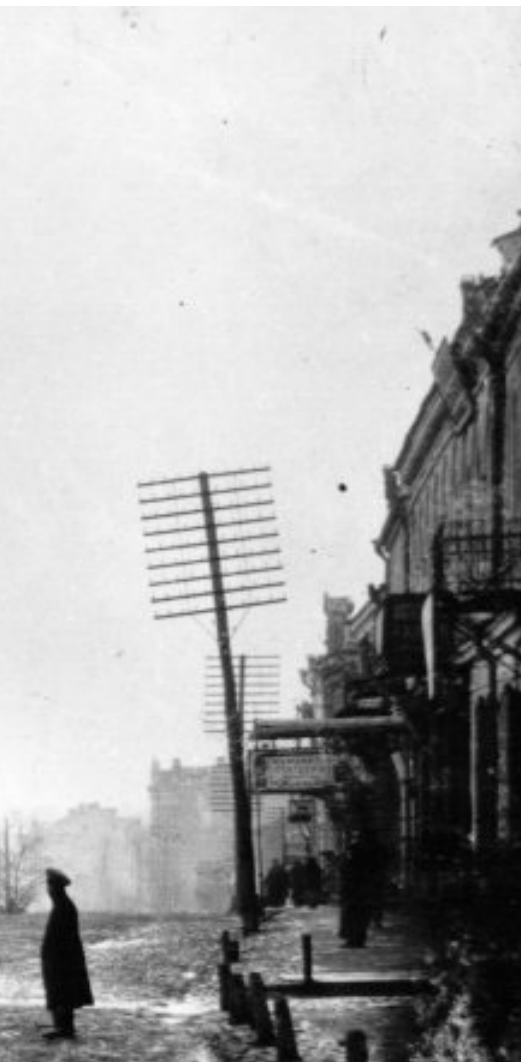


washing the floor and the walls of the house at which we had arrived.

## No help needed

I found out after a moment's wonderment that this was a *shtibel* of Tolna Chassidim. Speaking with some of those that had brought the water, I saw at once that these were Torah scholars, and Chassidim through-and-through. When I asked them what was going on, they told me that since their Rebbe was due to visit their town the next day, they wanted to put their *kloiz* in order, in proper condition to receive such an honored guest.

"So why are you doing all of this yourselves instead of giving the younger men a turn?" I asked them.



"After all, young people do need to be brought up in the ways of Chassidim, don't they? For their sake, older Chassidim ought to have *mesirus nefesh*."

"The reason that we are doing this ourselves," they answered, "and not through hired laborers, is that we want to have healthy angels to help out the advocating angels who come out of the *tekios* of the shofar."

One of them explained: "You know the '*Yehi Ratzon*' that is said after the *tekios* of Rosh HaShanah, the one that mentions 'the angels that are formed from the blowing of the shofar, and from the *tekiah*, the *shevarim*, the *teruah*, and the *tekiah*, and from the קשר" [i.e., the initials of these four names of the various kinds of sounds of the shofar]? Well, one Rosh HaShanah the holy Rav of Berditchev said: 'Sweet Father, compassionate Father! Just in case the angels that come out from the shofar that Levi Yitzchak ben Sarah has just blown, are weak angels, then let their place be taken by the holy, healthy angels that were created by the toil of Your people in preparation for Pesach, as they cleaned their kitchen utensils in order to fulfill their mitzvah as perfectly as possible, *kratzen* (scouring), *shobben* (scraping), *reiben* (rubbing) *kasheren* (making kosher)! [— for the initials of these four Yiddish words are likewise קשר" ].

"As for us," the old Chossid concluded, "we are doing all of this for the sake of His Name, and for the sake of his servant, our Rebbe (may he be blessed with good health)."

[My grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash resumed his recollections, as repeated to me by my father.]

## The Wealthy Man's Well

As I contemplated these Chassidim, the whole scene before me left a remarkably favorable impression. But then, when I was about to leave,

I noticed that right next to their *kloiz* there was a well.

"Why did you have to bring the water from so far," I asked the old folk, "if you have water right here?"


The same old man answered me: "Reb Baruch Yossel, one of our well-to-do Chassidim, asked and promised that if we would take water from his well—both today, in preparation for the Rebbe's arrival, and tomorrow, the first day of the Rebbe's visit—then in honor of the Rebbe he would prepare a big festive meal for all the Chassidim, at his expense."

## Our Unique Outlook

Having finished recounting this incident as he had heard it from his father, the Rebbe Maharash, my father now commented:

"We may gauge the impression that this encounter made upon my father from the fact that he related it in all its details. Moreover, when he had completed his narration he said to me: 'Here we can plainly see what spiritual forces the Baal Shem Tov drew down in this world, both for the Rebbe's and for the Chassidim, so that both the recipients and their mentors should—and will indeed—ready the world for the coming of Moshiach, speedily and in our own days, Amen!'"

For a long while now my father remained silent, deep in thought. Then he said:

"Regarding the question I asked the elderly Chossid as to why they didn't get the work done through hired men, it was answered well, but regarding the question I posed about allowing the younger Chassidim to have this opportunity he did not give any answer at all. This is because the *mesirus nefesh* needed to give yourself away for the benefit of a younger person is brought about only through Chassidus Chabad." 

(*Likutei Diburim* vol 1. p. 256. based on the English translation by Kehos).