

לזכות

שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר לראלי, נארט קאראליינא

הרה"ת ר' פינחס מרדכי וזוגתו מרת הלנה אילנה נורית

ולזכות משפחתם שיחיו

הרמן

להצלחה רבה ומופלגה במילוי שליחותם

ר' מיכאל דווארקין

# Reb Michoel Dvorkin

“One

of the pages of a Chumash, like one of the Jews leaving Mitzrayim.

day, as I sat studying in 770, a sight from ancient times walked into the study hall; he had a long beard, with a knapsack on his back and light-colored sandals on his feet. He looked as though he had just stepped out

“Who is that?” I whispered to a friend sitting nearby. ‘That’s Reb Michoel Dvorkin,’ he answered reverentially. Michoel Dvorkin! I immediately recognized his name from the printed sichos of the Friediker Rebbe.

“Now that I knew the identity of this distinguished figure, I paid careful attention to him, quickly realizing that this was a Chossid of extraordinary stature. Though Reb Michoel was neither a rov nor mashpia, Chassidus permeated every fiber of his being and he personified the essence of a Chossid.”

These words, written by Rabbi Shimon Goldman, then a bochur in 770, describe well the unique character that was Reb Michoel. A unique, almost mysterious individual who merited special attention from the Rabbeim, especially our Rebbe, as you will read in the coming pages...



“YOU CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT A REBBE”, HE TOLD HIM. “TRAVEL TO LUBAVITCH, AND MEANWHILE WE WILL DECIDE WHAT TO DO”.

### ***From Kapust to Lubavitch***

Reb Michoel Dvorkin was born in the town of Osvet, near Nevel, in the beginning of Teves 5626. Just a few short months after his birth, the Tzemach Tzedek was *nistalek*, and Reb Michoel's father, together with the rest of his extended family, began traveling to Kapust, to the “Maharil”, the second son of the Tzemach Tzedek. When the Magen Avos, the successor to the Maharil, passed away in 5660 without leaving a *memaleh makom*, the family gathered together to discuss who they would now turn to for guidance. It was then that Reb Michoel's father turned to him and advised him to travel to Lubavitch.

“You cannot survive without a Rebbe,” he said. “Travel to Lubavitch, and meanwhile we will decide what to do.”

Thus, Reb Michoel arrived in Lubavitch. By the time of his arrival, he was already an accomplished businessman. He had been blessed with a keen business sense; he worked for his father's lumber business and over time his fortune had grown. He even owned a number of apartment buildings in Petersburg. Nevertheless, he stopped all of his dealings and activities, and stayed in Lubavitch for a long period of time to properly dedicate himself to the Rebbe Rashab. One of the people who had a lasting effect on him

during this period of time was Reb Michoel Der Alter, the legendary *mashpia* of Lubavitch during the early years of Tomchei Temimim.

It did not take long for Reb Michoel to completely dedicate himself to the Rebbe Rashab. His love and dedication were soon reciprocated, and the Rebbe Rashab paid special attention to his new Chossid. Within a short period of time, Reb Michoel became practically a *ben bayis* in the Rebbe's house. Each time he would arrive in Lubavitch, he would bring presents for the Rebbe Rashab, the Frierdiker Rebbe, and for the Frierdiker Rebbe's young daughters. In 5663 (תרס"ג), when the Rebbe Rashab traveled to *datche*, one of the only people who merited to accompany him was Reb Michoel.

During a farbrengen in Tel Aviv, Reb Michoel told the following story:

“One year, as Pesach was approaching, I managed to get a hold of an expensive armchair, with red lining, just as there used to be in the houses of the nobility, and I brought it to Lubavitch as a present for the Rebbe.

“Early on Erev Pesach morning I arrived at the Rebbe's house, and I told the porter to place the chair in the corner. When the Rebbe passed by and saw it, he looked pleased, and he told me that since this is a chair of a count, I should also merit to be a גראף—a count. He explained that גר[א]ן is *roshei teivos* ‘gezunt, reich, frum.’

“And indeed, all of the *brachos* were fulfilled. I am healthy [Reb Michoel was known to be a strong healthy individual even when he was in his eighties], rich—what am I missing [at the time that he said the story, Reb Michoel could not even afford to buy himself a simple meal, yet he still felt that he was rich], and to being *frum*—there is no limit...”

Reb Michoel's dedication to the Rebbe Rashab, and later to the Frierdiker Rebbe, was absolute. At farbrengens of the Rebbe Rashab and the Frierdiker Rebbe, Reb Michoel would go to great lengths to obtain a good place to see and hear the Rebbe. On one occasion, while pushing to

get towards the Rebbe Rashab, he created a bit of a ruckus until someone asked, “Who’s pushing?”

He was answered by someone else “*Michoel der sheigetz.*” Hearing this exchange, the Rebbe Rashab corrected them. “*Michoel iz nit a sheigetz; Michoel iz a malach.*”

At a different farbrengen, Reb Michoel stood on a chair so that he would not be toppled by the pushing, and the Rebbe Rashab looked at him with a smile and said, “*Michoel* is the name of a *malach*, and the *malachim* are after all called *oimdim*.” Reb Michoel responded, “I don’t want to be an *oimed*; I just want to be next to the Rebbe.”

The Frierdiker Rebbe once commented, that there are two Chassidim that came from Kapust to Lubavitch; Reb Mendel Leib is a Lubavitcher, who just happened to travel to Kapust, and Reb Michoel is really a Kapuster, who ended up in Lubavitch. In other words, Reb Mendel Leib, who was calm and collected, fit into the style of Lubavitch, while Reb Michoel, who was lively and mischievous, was similar to the style of Kapust.

## REB MICHOEL RESPONDED, “I DON’T WANT TO BE AN OIMED; I JUST WANT TO BE NEXT TO THE REBBE”...

### *A Tohu’diker Ein Od*

Reb Michoel was a talented *baal menagen*; he would sing *niggunim* with much depth and beauty, and bring his listeners to new heights of inspiration. He also was an experienced violinist, and on a number of occasions he merited to play music on his violin in the presence of the Rabbeim.<sup>1</sup>

During the late 5690’s, and the early 5700’s, when the Frierdiker Rebbe was seeking to record all of the Chabad *niggunim* so that they wouldn’t be forgotten, he asked that Reb Michoel sing *niggunim* before someone who would write down their notes so that they would be preserved for posterity.

When Reb Michoel would hear someone singing a *niggun* without its proper notes, it would bother him greatly. Even one wrong twist would annoy him; he insisted that *niggunim* be sung with their exact original format, without changes or mistakes.

A number of *niggunim* that are well known today have been taught and passed down in their exact form by Reb



Michoel. The most famous of them is “*Nyet Nyet Nikavo.*”<sup>2</sup> In numerous *sichos*<sup>3</sup>, the Frierdiker Rebbe told over the story of the *niggun*’s first entrance into Lubavitch.

Reb Michoel was well versed in Russian, due to his work in the lumber yards, and he was known to say different phrases and sayings in the language of the land. One *Sukkos*, the Frierdiker Rebbe—during his years as *Menahel* of the *Yeshiva*—held a farbrengen in his *Sukkah*, and the crowd, Reb Michoel among them, was very upbeat and in good spirits.

After a while at the farbrengen, the Frierdiker Rebbe returned to his private room, where the Rebbe Rashab came to visit him. At that very moment, Reb Michoel walked out of the farbrengen into the hallway, loudly singing/saying the words of “*Nyet Nyet Nikavoh,*” which mean that there is nothing else besides the *Aibershter*. His face was red, and he was dancing with his entire being.

Hearing the commotion, the Rebbe Rashab stood next to the door to hear what Reb Michoel was saying, and hearing his words, he commented to the Frierdiker Rebbe

that this is a “*tohu'diker ein od.*” (I.e the proclamation of Hashem's Oneness is being carried out in a wild fashion.) The Rebbe added, that when something is done truthfully, it is worthwhile, no matter how small. And when something is done without truth, even if it is big, it is worthless.

When Reb Michoel found out that the Rebbe Rashab had been listening to his singing, he began banging his head from extreme emotion.

Aside for two more *niggunei simcha* that we know today thanks to Reb Michoel, there is a famous *niggun* that stands out, which we sing today in a version passed down by Reb Michoel. This is the *niggun* of Reb Yechiel Michel Zlotchover, who would sing it before his Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov. Before his *histalkus*, the Baal Shem Tov said that when someone is in need, he should sing this *niggun*, and he will come to his aid. Since then, the *niggun* has held a special place amongst all Chassidim.

When Reb Michoel sang the *niggun* in front of the Rebbe Rashab in 5677 (תרע"ז), the Rebbe Rashab noted that his version was the correct one. Years earlier, the Chassidim had sung two versions of the *niggun* before the Rebbe Maharash, and the Rebbe Maharash had chosen the same version that Reb Michoel had just sung.

Decades later, when the Frierdiker Rebbe had already arrived in the United States, he repeated that story, and he added, that when “my son-in-law [the Rebbe] will arrive in America, he will sing the *niggun* in Reb Michoel's version.”<sup>4</sup>

## Chof Ches Sivan

A few days after the Rebbe arrived in the United States on Chof-Ches Sivan, 5701, the Rebbe was asked to farbreng with *anash* at 770.

Two days later, on Shabbos parshas Korach, Gimmel Tammuz, the Frierdiker Rebbe held a farbrengen - the first one in the United States with the Rebbe present at his side.

According to a story related in the *Kovetz Chof Ches Sivan* (distributed by the Rebbe in 5751), the Frierdiker Rebbe asked if anyone present can sing the *niggun* of Reb Michel Zlotchover in the version of Reb Michoel Dvorkin, whereupon the Rebbe sang this *niggun*.

According to another source, the Rebbe actually sang this *niggun* during his farbrengen two days earlier. (Yemei Melech vol. 2 p. 566)

When Reb Michoel himself arrived in America, he was recorded singing this *niggun* along with one other, and the recording eventually was given to the Rebbe, who passed it on to the choir of Nichoach, instructing them to include it in their next album.



SEVERAL OF THE NIGGUNIM THAT REB MICHOEL INTRODUCED WERE INCLUDED IN THE NICHACH RECORDS, EVEN A RAW RECORDING OF REB MICHOEL SINGING TWO NIGGUNIM.

## The Next Generation

After the *histalkus* of the Rebbe Rashab in 5680 (תר"פ), Reb Michoel was immediately *mekasher* himself to the Frierdiker Rebbe, who was fifteen years younger than him.

Once, Reb Michoel was present at a farbrengen of the Frierdiker Rebbe in Leningrad. Overcome with excitement, he exclaimed, “*Dem taten's neshama iz in em!*” — (his father, the Rebbe Rashab's *neshama* is within him) referring to the Frierdiker Rebbe—and the Frierdiker Rebbe responded with a smile.

Reb Michoel's *mesiras nefesh* and dedication to the Rebbe during those hard years became well known. When the Frierdiker Rebbe lived in Leningrad, the connection was as such that Reb Michoel lived in an apartment down the hall and was often sent by the Frierdiker Rebbe on secret missions to further Jewish education and deal with other aspects of the Frierdiker Rebbe's activities. Reb Zev Zalmanov, a child at the time, related that it was a well known fact that Reb Michoel would often leave to an unknown location, and after some time, he would return and report to the Frierdiker Rebbe about his trip.

In truth, Reb Michoel's involvement in the most intimate and clandestine activities of the Frierdiker Rebbe was not something that began during those years. Reb Foleh Kahn would relate that he was once standing in the Warsaw train station during the early 5670's (תר"ע-ע"ה), when he suddenly saw the Frierdiker Rebbe, together with Reb Michoel, get off a train and rush through the station with somber looks on their faces, trying not to stand out.



While he never was told what the purpose of the trip was, it was clear that they were dealing with an important issue in *avodas haklal*, which they wanted to keep as quiet as possible.

## Yud Beis Tammuz

The arrest and liberation of the Frierdiker Rebbe have a special place in the life story of Reb Michoel.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe was imprisoned in the Shpalerka prison, the Chassidim found out that his interrogator was a Jewish man by the name of Nachmansohn, who had grown up in a religious and Chassidishe home in Osvet, Reb Michoel's hometown. Jumping for every scrap of information that they could get their hands on, Reb Michoel was dispatched to convince the still religious father of the interrogator to come to Leningrad, and squeeze information out of his son. After some persuasion the father agreed, and from time to time Reb Michoel would meet him in a public park where he would give over small tidbits of information about the Rebbe. In fact, it was through this contact that the Chassidim initially heard that the Frierdiker Rebbe would be exiled to Kostroma.

Sure enough, the Frierdiker Rebbe was released on Gimmel Tammuz, and a few hours later he set out on the long journey to Kostroma. Before the Frierdiker Rebbe left, Reb Michoel was dispatched to the distant town—where he had an old acquaintance—to prepare for the Rebbe's arrival.

Immediately upon reaching the town, Reb Michoel set out to do everything that was necessary to prepare for the arrival of the Rebbe. The friend that he had known, a Chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek, had since passed away, but his son-in-law still lived there and served as the town's *shochet*. Reb Michoel arranged for the Frierdiker Rebbe to stay in his house, although—Reb Michoel later recounted—there was a suspicion that this *shochet* was an informant for the GPU.

In addition to finding appropriate lodgings, Reb Michoel had the town *mikveh* fixed, and he set about organizing a *cheder* for the local Jewish population. In essence,

he began to do the very activities the Frierdiker Rebbe was being punished for (in *sichos* years later, the Rebbe compared it to the story of Yehuda doing the same for Yaakov Avinu before he arrived in Mitzrayim).

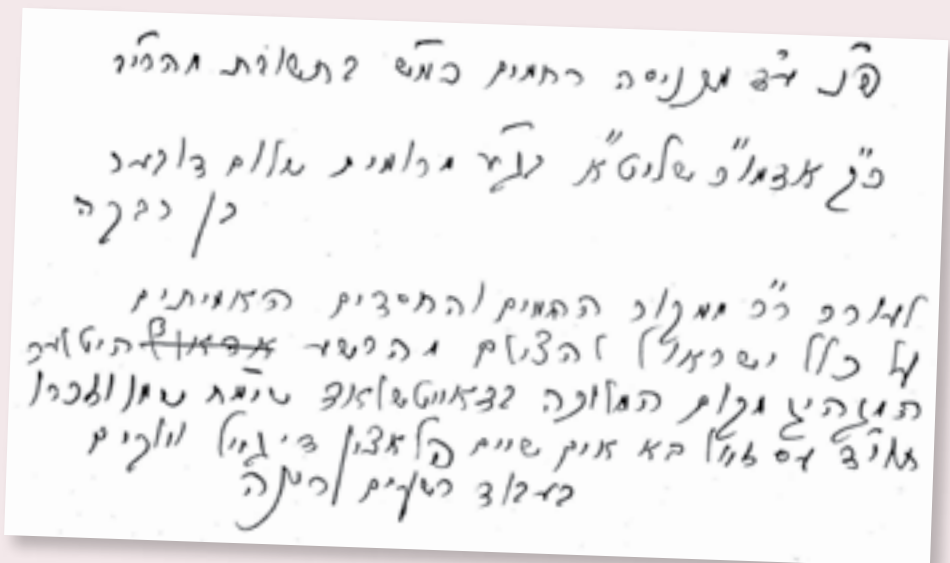
When the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived in the city, Reb Michoel was one of the only people who were allowed to stay together with the Rebbe, for what seemed to be the beginning of a long and painful exile. The only other individuals present were Reb Elya Chaim Althaus and the Frierdiker Rebbe's daughter, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka.

Ten days into their stay in Kostroma, the Frierdiker Rebbe, along with Reb Elya Chaim Althaus, went to report and register at the local police station, as he was to do each Tuesday. When he arrived there, he was told that an order had been sent to release him and allow him to return home.

The amazing news flew across town, and when the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived back to the home of the local *shochet*, he was greeted by the happy sight of Reb Michoel dancing around the house with a bottle of *mashke* in his hand, singing 'Nyet Nyet Nikavo,'<sup>5</sup> and the son of the *shochet* prancing around dancing on his hands.

The story of this scene was told over to our Rebbe, who spoke about it at a Yud-Beis Tammuz farbrengen,<sup>6</sup> and even brought back the *niggun*, which had been somewhat forgotten over the years. In essence, the Rebbe made it the Yud-Beis Tammuz *niggun*, and in a sicha in 5748,<sup>7</sup> the Rebbe explained why this *niggun* is so connected with the theme of Yud-Beis Tammuz.

Every *golus*, the Rebbe explained, is *nishtalshel* from the original *golus*, which is the *tzimtzum* and lack of revealed *Elokus* that characterizes our world, *oilam hazeh hagashmi*.



REB MICHOEL'S PAN UPON HEARING OF THE HOLOCAUST, REQUESTING THAT THE YIDDEN BE SAVED FROM THE HANDS OF HITLER.

Each *geulah*, therefore, is an expression of the ultimate redemption, which is characterized by the fact that *Elokus* will be revealed. We will recognize that it is the Aibershter who is the real existence, while we, in truth, are just nothingness; this is the exact meaning of the *niggun*.

### What do I need a hand for?

During a *sicha* in 5712<sup>8</sup>, the Rebbe related:

During the time that the Frierdiker Rebbe was in exile, in Kostroma, he continued to be active in *hafotzas hamayanos*, such as creating *chadarim*, *mikvaos*, etc.

On Shabbos, the Rebbe davened at length in the shul. This caused a stir in the town—a Jew davening until three or four in the afternoon! Everyone had already finished davening, eaten *seudas Shabbos*, and also had enough time to sleep, and here stands a *rabin* and is still davening. The furor was to the extent that the town priest came to the shul to see the attraction...

Nevertheless, the fact that at that time the Rebbe was not able to write a letter to a Yid in regards to basic things bothered him terribly, to the point that he told one of the Chassidim who were with him—either Reb Elya Chaim or Reb Michoel—that if that is the case, who needs a hand? It would be better if it would wither away.

This was the hand of the Rebbe, with which he laid tefillin, and did many acts of *kedusha*. Nevertheless he said that since a few days had gone by without writing to another Yid, it would be better for it to wither!

The lesson to each one of us is obvious...

### Longing for the Rebbe

When the Frierdiker Rebbe left Russia on Isru Chag Sukkos 5688, Reb Michoel was forced to remain behind. Reb Michoel immediately began searching for ways to leave the country, albeit without success.

The years of Communism brought on hard times for the Chassidim spiritually, as well as physically, but Reb Michoel never allowed moping. Once, he walked into a room where Reb Zalman Duchman was working by a sewing machine, and noticed that Reb Zalman looked unhappy. He immediately rebuked him; “*Ivdu es Hashem b’simcha*,” he said. “The Rebbe Rashab held that the



A LETTER FROM REB MICHOEL TO THE FRIERDIKER REBBE, REQUESTING PERMISSION TO TRAVEL TO THE USA TO SEE THE REBBE. THE LETTER IS SIGNED ‘HOP COSSACK, YOUR SERVANT MICHOEL’.

obligation of ‘*sheishes yomim taavod*—six days a week you should work’ is also a mitzvah, and therefore deserves to be done in a happy manner.”

Towards the end of 5693 (תרצ"ג), Reb Michoel traveled to Leningrad, where he moved into the Kovlanov home for about a half a year, as part of his efforts to obtain a visa.

Reb Mendel Kovlanov, a young child at the time, related:

“I was a young lad when Reb Michoel came to live in our home, I did not know who he was and where he was from. My father gave him a room in our home, and also provided him with a sewing machine with which he would sew socks for some time each day. Later, we found out that his name was Michoel Dvorkin.

“He had a son, called Mumke, who lived somewhere else. He had learned in Nevel, and was trained to be a *shochet*. During the Second World War, he was drafted into the military and was never seen again.

“Regarding Reb Michoel himself, I found out over time that he desperately wanted to leave Russia; the main reason was, that he wanted to see the Rebbe.

“My father managed to arrange a passport for him, and during the winter of 5694, he left for Riga, Latvia.”

When Reb Michoel arrived in Riga, he was finally reunited with the Rebbe, and his happiness knew no bounds. Nevertheless, it seems that he immediately began



A LETTER FROM THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S MAZKIRUS TO REB MICHOEL, URGING HIM TO HELP THOSE STRANDED IN RUSSIA WITH ACQUIRING VISAS, 25 AV 5696.

thinking about immigrating to Eretz Yisrael, and in a letter from the Frierdiker Rebbe at the time, the Rebbe blesses him with a safe trip.

Before leaving for the Holy Land, a *shidduch* was suggested to Reb Michoel (his first wife had passed away). Since the woman had a daughter who was not yet married, Reb Michoel arranged a *shidduch* for her first, and only afterwards did he marry and travel to Eretz Yisrael together with his wife and step daughter and son-in-law.

### *Nachalas Binyamin*

During his days in Riga, and during his first years in Eretz Yisrael, Reb Michoel worked tirelessly to obtain visas for Chassidim stranded in Russia. Numerous letters of the Frierdiker Rebbe, to Reb Michoel and to others, speak about his energetic efforts to help obtain the release

### *With the Rebbe's father, Horav Levi Yitzchok Schneersohn*

In his memoirs "Lesheima Ozen," Reb Zalman Duchman writes about his encounters with the Rebbe's father, Horav Levi Yitzchak, while he was visiting Leningrad in the winter of 5688 (תרפ"ח):

"I had already met him in Lubavitch in 5666 or 5667, and I had heard at the time that the Rebbe Rashab said that he is one of the three yungerleit 'with whom he will pride himself in this world and next.'

"The pleasure that we experienced during that period of time is impossible to describe. We would go visit him almost every single night, and he would often explain to us the meaning of different Midrashim according to Chassidus.

"One time, Reb Michoel Dvorkin challenged him and asked him 'Where do you know all of this from?'

"Horav Levi Yitzchok answered, 'M'hot mir ibergegebin—it was conveyed to me;' meaning, he had heard the premise for this way of learning from the Rebbe Rashab.

"During the winter in Leningrad, Shabbos begins at three o'clock in the afternoon, so after the *seudah*, Reb Michoel, a few other Chassidim and myself would go over to the house he was staying at. One time, he was laying on a couch when we entered, and he told us that the Rebbe Rashab had once instructed him that even when he is lying down and resting, he should be constantly using his mind.

"Once, after he told us something, Reb Michoel asked him for a source. He immediately pointed us to a book on the shelf, which we realized was an Etz Chaim, and told us which page it was on. Pinyeh Althaus told me to turn the page, and Horav Levi Yitzchak proceeded to recite the text on the page word-for-word, just as a regular person would recite *Ashrei*. I was blown away. If he was so well versed in Etz Chaim, he was obviously just as well versed in many other, more basic, *sefarim*."

Reb Michoel's connection with Horav Levi Yitzchak continued the next year, when the wedding of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin approached. Being that the Communist government refused to allow the Rebbe's parents to participate, they held their own celebration in their home, together with hundreds of well-wishers.

The Chassidim of Leningrad sent Reb Michoel to be their representative at the celebration in Yekatrineslav, and he participated, along with his violin. At one point in the celebration, Reb Michoel took his instrument and played the the niggun of *Daled Bavos*. The hauntingly beautiful notes, played at the same time as it was being sung in the so distant wedding hall in Warsaw, struck a deep chord in the hearts of the guests in the home of Horav Levi Yitzchak; they felt as if they were joining in and participating in the actual wedding, which an oppressive hand had so heartlessly blocked from their path.

of those Chassidim, but it seems that his efforts were not blessed with much success.

Aside for these efforts, Reb Michoel spent his days in Eretz Yisrael learning Chassidus and farbrenging with the Chassidim who lived in Tel Aviv and its surroundings.

Reb Sholom Chaskind related about that period of time:

“As a child, I would sleep in the house of my grandfather, Reb Shlomo Tumarkin, and Reb Michoel would come to see my grandfather quite often. They would sit together, talk and farbreng for hours upon hours. It was wintertime, and the apartment would be cold. They would put a large *cheinik* of hot water, with a small stove on the table, and they would sit there learning and farbrenging





and drinking tea. There were times that they refilled the *cheinik* with water three times in one night.”

Reb Michoel was also an active participant in *farbrenge* amongst the Chassidim, and is remembered for his many stories and sharp *vertlach* that he would tell over with a quick tongue and vivid descriptions. While he was not a quiet individual, and he had known many *tzaros* during his lifetime, Reb Michoel never revealed his pain to anyone, and never once mentioned the hardships that he had endured.

## Reb Nochum's Shiurim

During his years in Eretz Yisrael, one could always find Reb Michoel sitting in the Chabad shul on Nachalas Binyamin Street in Tel Aviv, learning Chassidus for many hours at a time. He would proceed slowly through each *maamar*, reviewing every word a number of times, living through whatever he was learning. When he was once asked, why he had traveled to Eretz Yisrael, he responded, “To hear Reb Nochum Goldshmidt explain Chassidus.”

“Very often,” Reb Leibel Zalmanov recalls, “Reb Michoel would sleep in our home. One Purim night, I was alone in the house, and he invited me to learn a *maamar* with him.

“I pulled out a *sefer Chassidus*, and the first *maamar* that I opened to was *Balayla Hahu*. Reb Michoel began to read, and when he reached the word *hamelech*, he paused, began to breath rapidly, and suddenly burst into tears. It seemed as if he had just recited the word *hamelech* in the Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur davening. Our *chavrusa'shaft* ended there...”

His davening was also in his warm and *hartzige* style, and when davening before the *amud*, he would often burst into tears. One Shabbos, when he reached the words “*veineinu sir'ena malchusecha*” he began to cry like a child. Swept along with his feeling and passion, many of those present began to cry as well. Those who were standing near Reb Michoel's close friend, the famed Chossid Reb Zalman Moshe Hayitzchaki, heard him muttering between his teeth, “*Ah! Es vilt zich em...*”

A few years had passed since he had last seen the Frierdiker Rebbe, and he once again felt a growing desire to visit the Frierdiker Rebbe, who was then living in Otwock, Poland. He attempted to obtain a passport and the proper documentation to travel to Poland, but meanwhile World War II broke out, and he was not able to realize his plans. In 5701, he expressed his frustrations to the Frierdiker Rebbe in a letter, in which he claimed that he is missing true *simchas hanefesh* in his *avodah*.

The Frierdiker Rebbe answered him a short while later, comforting him, and telling him that every Chossid has

true *simcha* within himself, and all one needs to do is reveal it within himself, through learning Chassidus and living by its teachings.

## Reb Michoel's Panim

When the news of the Nazi's atrocities reached Eretz Yisrael, Chassidim throughout the world were gripped with worry about the fate of the Frierdiker Rebbe, who was stranded in Poland, at the mercy of the German war planes, which would viciously attack and bombard the Jewish section of Warsaw with bombs and gunfire from their aircraft.

The war broke out just two weeks before Rosh Hashanah 5700 (ה'ת"ש). For the first *maariv* of the new year, in the Chabad shul in Tel Aviv, Reb Michoel lead the davening. Arriving at the words 'ותשועת צדיקים מה', מעורם בעת צרה, he was overcome with emotion; his entire body was wracked with heartrending sobs. He was so lost in his tears, that the *minyán* had no choice but to appoint someone else to act as *chazzan*, while Reb Michoel remained in the *chazzan's* place crying his heart out.

When more details of the German's actions became known reaching Eretz Yisrael, Reb Michoel sat down to write a *pan*.

When he was not able to send a *pan* to the Rebbe, he would take the first *sefer Chassidus* that he came across, and he would write a *pan* to the Rebbe that was the author of that *sefer*. It so happened that he found a *sefer of maamarim* of the Rebbe Rashab, and he began to write:

כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א בגן עדן...אנא לעורר רחמים רבים...על עדת ישראל להצילם מהרשע היטלער...עס זאל ביי אים שייס פלאצן די גאל

When the war finally came to an end, Reb Michoel once again began his efforts to come see the Rebbe, who was by that time in New York. Meanwhile, he fell ill with pneumonia and his illness lasted a considerable amount of time. But as soon as he got well, he returned to his efforts to travel to the United States.

He wrote to the Frierdiker Rebbe about his wish, and although he did not initially get permission, he continued to ask the Rebbe for *reshus tzu zich zehin*. Once the Frierdiker Rebbe gave his consent, he needed to find someone who would invite him to the United States, as per

HE WAS SO LOST IN HIS  
TEARS, THAT THE MINYAN  
HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO  
APPOINT SOMEONE ELSE  
TO ACT AS CHAZZAN.

the immigration laws. Ultimately, he received an invitation as a researcher for Chassidus who is coming to the country to research in the American libraries.

The long awaited visa arrived in 5706, and his excitement knew no bounds. During those years, he was in contact with Reb Berel Chaskind, who lived then in New York, and they made up that Reb Michoel would let him know his arrival information—which ship he was traveling on, and what day he would be arriving—so that someone would be able to pick him up at the port; for Reb Michoel did not speak the language of the land and he would not be able to find his way on his own.

Reb Sholom Chaskind, Reb Berel's son, relates:

"We knew that Reb Michoel was planning on leaving Eretz Yisrael very soon, so we were awaiting the arrival of a telegram with the details of his arrival, but no telegram arrived.

"We lived very close to 770 in those days. One afternoon, I saw a group of *bochurim* crowding around someone. When I asked who it was, I was told that Reb Michoel Dvorkin had arrived from Eretz Yisrael. After the excitement died down a bit, I went over to him to tell him *sholom aleichem*. He recognized me right away, and hugged and kissed me as if I was his age. He took my arm and said, "Sholom, *lamir gein a tentzl*." We danced together in 770, and then I took him to my home.

"After a warm welcome in my house, my father asked him, 'Reb Michoel, why didn't you send a telegram as we had made up?'

"Reb Michoel looked surprised, 'What? You didn't receive my telegram?'

"After a short investigation, we figured out what had happened. Reb Michoel had not wanted to send a telegram from Eretz Yisrael, lest something come up last minute and stop him from going. Instead, when the ship stopped in Alexandria, he went out onto the port, stopped a young Arab boy, gave him some money and the text of the telegram, and asked him to go to the nearest post office and send the telegram... We now understood why the telegram never reached its destination.

"We asked him how he managed to find 770 on his own, and he told us that he met a Jewish taxi driver who knew some Yiddish, he showed him the address, and he was driven to 770. The *bochurim* helped *shlep* his bags into the building, and he didn't need anything more than that."

## By the Rebbe

Rabbi Shimon Goldman, a *bochur* in 770 at the time, relates:

"One day, as I sat studying in 770, a sight from ancient times walked into the study hall; he had a long beard,

with a knapsack on his back and light-colored sandals on his feet. He looked as though he had just stepped out of the pages of a Chumash, like one of the Jews leaving Mitzrayim.

"Who is that?'

I whispered to a friend sitting nearby. 'That's Reb Michoel Dvorkin,' he answered reverentially. Michoel Dvorkin! I immediately recognized his name from the printed *sichos* of the Frierdiker Rebbe.

"Now that I knew the identity of this distinguished figure, I paid careful attention to him, quickly realizing that this was a Chossid of extraordinary stature. Though Reb Michoel was neither a *rov* nor *mashpia*, Chassidus permeated every fiber of his being and he personified the essence of a Chossid."

"His *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe was his entire being, and he did not care in the slightest for himself. If someone would ask him '*Vus machstu?*' he would answer, '*Vus ken shoyn a gemachter machen?*'"

When the Frierdiker Rebbe heard that Reb Michoel had arrived, he called Reb Berel Chaskind and instructed him to rent a room for Reb Michoel, and to provide him with his daily needs, and he—the Frierdiker Rebbe himself—would pay for it. However, the Frierdiker Rebbe warned him that under no circumstances should Reb Michoel find out where the money was coming from.

Reb Berel followed the Rebbe's instructions, and after obtaining a room, he told Reb Michoel that he had met a certain Jew in New York, who, upon hearing about Reb Michoel, agreed to pay for his needs, on condition that he remain anonymous.

It is possible that Reb Michoel understood where the money was really coming from. Every Rosh Chodesh, he would come to the store of Reb Berel Chaskind to pick up the money for his rent, and the rest of the money he would take little by little; whenever he needed something, he would take the exact amount and not a penny more.

Each day, he would sit in 770 and listen to the learning and the conversations of the *bochurim*, while acting as if he was not paying attention to what was going on. He would sit on a bench with his back to the table, have one foot over the other with his hat on his lap, and stare at some



## “BUT REB YOCHANAN LIVES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET.” THE REBBE JUST REPEATED CALMLY, “MICHOEL IS GOING TO YOCHANAN”.

point of the wall or the ceiling. If he would hear one of the *bochurim* learning a *pshat* wrong, he would turn around and matter-of-factly say, “*Du ploiderst*—you are speaking nonsense.”

Rabbi Aharon Zakon related:

“The Frierdiker Rebbe would receive people for *yechidus* each Sunday and Thursday, and in order to enter, one needed to schedule the *yechidus* with the *mazkirus*.

“After the first Shabbos that I was in New York, I went to the room of the *mazkirus*, and I asked Reb Elya Simpson to arrange a *yechidus* with the Rebbe.

“Next to Rabbi Simpson was sitting Reb Michoel Dvorkin, who asked me, ‘*Shoin yechidus*—You already want to go into *yechidus*? Why are you rushing? Prepare yourself a bit, you have just arrived.’ Obviously, I took his advice and retracted my request.”

### ***Yom Tov Seudos***

Each Yom Tov, Reb Michoel was invited to the *seudos* at the Frierdiker Rebbe’s table, who gave him special attention, and often he would sing during the *seudah*. The

Frierdiker Rebbe himself would sometimes mention Reb Michoel in *sichos*, especially when they would sing the *niggun* of Reb Michel Zlotchover.

The following story is just another example of the special connection he had with the Frierdiker Rebbe. One Shabbos morning, the nurse Monye was standing in the Frierdiker Rebbe’s room looking out the window, and she commented to the Frierdiker Rebbe that she sees Reb Michoel entering Berel Chaskind’s apartment building—across the street from 770.

The Frierdiker Rebbe replied that, “Michoel is not going to Berel; he is going to Yochanan [Gordon].” The nurse was surprised—“But Reb Yochanan lives on the other side of the street.” The Rebbe just repeated calmly, “Michoel is going to Yochanan.”

Curious to see what would happen, she remained by the window to watch what Reb Michoel would do. Surprisingly, after a few short moments, she saw Reb Michoel leave the building and walk towards the home of Reb Yochanan Gordon. Determined to understand what occurred, she later approached Reb Michoel and asked him to explain what had transpired. “I knocked on Berel’s door and no one answered,” he simply replied. “So I went to Yochanon.”

The Rabbeim’s connection to Reb Michoel continued with our Rebbe. After arriving in the United States, the Rebbe took personal interest in the wellbeing of Reb Michoel; the Rebbetzin related that when the Rebbe was notified by telephone about the passing of Reb Michoel (as you will read later) his reaction was so strong that she

### ***Questions on the Aibershter***

There was a certain young Litvisher *lamdan* that would come once a week to learn Chassidus with Reb Shmuel Levitin in his room in 770. This individual was a talented and thoughtful person who would ask many questions throughout the *shiur*, and Reb Shmuel would answer him patiently.

One week, Reb Michoel Dvorkin was lying on the bed that was in the room, and when the time for the *shiur* arrived, Reb Shmuel asked Reb Michoel to leave, because he knew that Reb Michoel would not be able to handle the atmosphere of questions and *chakirah*, etc. Reb Michoel said that he is not feeling well, and he needs to lay in the bed, but Reb Shmuel insisted that he find himself a different place to sleep. At the end, Reb Michoel promised Reb Shmuel that he will remain silent throughout the entire *shiur*.

The young man showed up and they began to learn. As usual he asked questions and Reb Shmuel answered him on each one. As time went on, Reb Shmuel realized that Reb Michoel was twisting and turning uncomfortably; suddenly he picked himself up from his bed as if bitten by a snake, and yelled at the young man from the depths of his heart, “How dare you ask questions on the Aibershter?” He then ran out of the room.

Reb Shmuel was convinced that the young man would never come back, but to his surprise he did continue on, and after a while he said that all of Reb Shmuel’s *shiurim* did not affect him as did the outburst of Reb Michoel, which expressed the truth. That the *emes* is in the hands of the Aibershter, and the questions that we have come only from the fact that our *nefesh habehamis* considers himself to be a *metzius*.

thought something terrible had occurred in the house of her father, the Friediker Rebbe.

After Reb Michoel passed away, the Rebbe personally took care of all of the details of his burial, and even requested to have his tefillin.

The Rebbe's view of Reb Michoel is expressed in a *sicha*<sup>9</sup>, where, while recounting a story about Reb Michoel, the Rebbe said that "He didn't even know that he deserved to be referred to as **Reb Michoel**," and was called plainly 'Michoel.'

## To stay, or to go back

Being that Reb Michoel was in the United States on the premise that he was doing research on Chassidic philosophy, every half a year it was necessary to lengthen his visa on the basis that he did not yet finish his research. They would contact the State Department, and the officials would lengthen his stay.

However, that was not the only permission that was needed. Since the Friediker Rebbe had given him permission solely "*tzu zich zeh'n*," Reb Berel Chaskind would go into the Friediker Rebbe every once in a while to ask that Reb Michoel be allowed to stay a bit longer.

The last time he did so was after Pesach 5709; while each time before then the Rebbe had given *reshus*, this time he insisted that he return to Eretz Yisrael. Reb Michoel was devastated upon hearing the news. For him, the instruction to return to Eretz Yisrael was a hint that his end was nearing...

On Erev Shavuos 5709, Reb Michoel went to *mikveh*, and on his way home he bought cherries in order to recite a Shehecheyanu (which he could not do during the entire Sefirah). He proceeded to the store of Reb Berel Chaskind where he spoke to him for a few moments, and then he went to his room, in the house of Reb Mendel Mayzes, where he ate some of the cherries. Suddenly he didn't feel well, and he laid down on his bed.

ON THE SECOND DAY OF  
YOM TOV, THE FRIERDIKER  
REBBE ASKED AGAIN WITH  
MORE INSISTENCE, AND  
ON MOTZEI YOM TOV HE  
TURNED TO THE REBBE  
AND ASKED, "WHEN DID IT  
HAPPEN?"

A short while later Reb Mendel's wife arrived home, and realizing that she had forgotten her key, she knocked on the door, hoping that someone would open up for her. Reb Michoel heard the knocks, and although he was not feeling well (it seems that he suffered a stroke), he got out of his bed, laboriously walked to the door, opened it and turned to return to his room while holding on to the door for support. Noticing his weakness, Reb Mendel's wife immediately called for the doctor, but by the time he arrived, there was nothing left for him to do. Reb Michoel was eighty three years old.

Those present immediately notified the Rebbe (then known as Ramash), and he personally dealt with all of the necessary details. Reb Michoel's passport, and all of the necessary documentation were brought to the Rebbe, who asked the doctor, Dr. Ness, to sign on the death certificate, but he refused, saying that he first needed to conduct an X-ray on the body to determine the cause of death.

The hour was late, and the Rebbe wanted the burial to be conducted before Yom Tov began, instead of leaving the *nifter* until after Yom Tov. When the doctor continued to hesitate, the Rebbe promised him *Olam Habah* in exchange for his signature. Upon hearing that, the doctor signed on the spot. The *levaya* was conducted, and concluded mere minutes before *shkia*.

That night at the Yom Tov *seudah*, the Friediker Rebbe noticed that Reb Michoel was missing, and asked the Rebbe where he was, but the Rebbe avoided answering the question. When he asked again the next morning, he was once again not given a clear answer. On the second day of Yom Tov, the Friediker Rebbe asked again with more insistence, and on Motzei Yom Tov he turned to the Rebbe and asked, "When did it happen?"

A few short months earlier the Friediker Rebbe advised him to return to Eretz Yisrael, but he wanted to remain—"Ich vil bleiben bam Rebb'n," he said. His wish was fulfilled; he merits to lay just a few short steps from the Ohel of the Rebbe and Friediker Rebbe. **1**

1. See also "Defiance and Hope" - Derher Magazine Tammuz 5773.
2. Igros Kodesh Admu"r Haraya"tz תתקני"ח page עח, as well as בתע"ט page תג, and בתר"כ page תקלט
3. Sefer Hasichos 5699 page 302, Seder Hasichos Kayitz 5700 page 85, Sefer Hasichos 5707 page 120.
4. Pesach 5700
5. The Rebbe noted that Reb Michoel did not drink a drop of the liquid; he simply held it in his hand while he was dancing.
6. 12 Tammuz 5725
7. Sefer Hasichos 5748 p. 517
8. 28 Sivan 5712
9. 12 Tammuz 5712