



# A Job for the Chassidim

Jealousy, hatred and misdirected anger is what caused the Russian peasants to turn on their Jewish neighbors.

The summer of 5639 (תרל"ט) saw great unrest as the successful Jewish lumber merchants were being attacked and abused by the locals. It was no great surprise that the government did not come to their rescue.

Throughout the following winter, the Rebbe Maharash made a number of trips to Petersburg and Moscow in order to resolve these communal matters.

When he realized that the officials were not interested in helping, the

Rebbe Maharash decided to take drastic measures, and right after Shavuot he travelled to Germany and France to rally help from abroad. Upon his return to Russia, he went directly to Petersburg to meet with many influential ministers.

However, he soon realized that something had changed. In the past he had always been welcomed warmly and graciously, but this time they were being openly hostile and very uncooperative.

Not quite ready to give up, the Rebbe Maharash called an urgent meeting of the influential and wealthy Jews in Petersburg and suggested that two

people should volunteer to join him in approaching the interior minister and request that he arrange a meeting with the Czar.

The plan was unanimously accepted by everyone but it fell short because there were no two people ready to volunteer themselves.

Slowly, one by one, the truth started coming out. The Russian government was furious at the Rebbe Maharash because he had the nerve to involve foreign nations in their private business and embarrass them in so disgraceful a manner.

One of those present at the meeting repeated what he had heard from reliable sources. Apparently the assistant minister of foreign affairs had said to the finance minister that, "Ever since the *'tzaddik'* Schneerson from Lubavitch visited Germany and France

and met with some of the most influential bankers and investors there, they threatened to halt all business dealings with Russia until the Jews were treated fairly."

The Rebbe Maharash was unnerved when hearing this and he calmly replied, "I am already aware of this because Professor Bertonson told me about this. He also told me that there are those who felt I should be punished for my actions. To this I replied, 'Am I any better than my holy predecessors? At a time like this I don't think about myself.'"

In reality, the Rebbe Maharash realized that his trip had indeed been successful and with a bit of pressure things started moving.

He concluded the meeting by saying, "We now have to meet with the interior minister himself

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לע"נ  
הרה"ת ר' רפאל משה הכהן ע"ה  
שפערלין  
גלב"ע י"א מר-חשון ה'תשנ"ה  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.  
נדפס ע"י משפחתו שיחיו



## DOES THE GOVERNMENT REALLY THINK WE WILL WATCH THE BLOOD OF OUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS BEING SPILLED FREELY, OUR POSSESSIONS LOOTED AND THEN BOW DOWN AND KISS THE HANDS OF THE PERPETRATORS?!

and request an audience with the Czar. If you wealthy gentleman are more concerned about your own money and skin, I will take two of my Chassidim along with me.”

It took about a week for the Rebbe Maharash to receive an appointment to meet with the minister. The two Chassidim who were to accompany him were Reb Chaim Massejev and Reb Nochum Hermant, and they later relayed what had occurred.

When the Rebbe Maharash walked into the meeting, the minister greeted him with honor and one could tell that he was visibly impacted by the Rebbe's presence. Despite the respectful reception, the minister rebuked him for taking internal matters to foreigners and scolded him that he was deserving

of punishment as severe as those who rebel and revolt. The government was very displeased that he was mixing into their affairs and trying to manipulate them.

The Rebbe Maharash didn't flinch in the face of the harsh remarks and he replied:

“Does the government really think we will watch the blood of our sons and daughters being spilled freely, our possessions looted and then bow down and kiss the hands of the perpetrators?!

“No! We are upstanding citizens of this land and we have fulfilled our obligation to the government both with our bodies and money like all the other inhabitants. The degradation and humiliation that we are forced into ghettos and prohibited from settling

wherever we want is more than enough, and now the authorities are supporting the activities of criminals that are out to harm our wives, sons, daughters and ourselves, like a nation without any protection. We, like all residents, demand protection and safety.


“The reason I came here was to inform you, in my name and in the name of all the Jews, residents of this land, that I want an audience with the King, to relay to His Majesty our situation and to hear from His Excellency if we have been sentenced to death at the hands of these bandits. The promises and assurances of the ministers are worthless in our eyes and in the name of justice and righteousness we are turning to you to make this happen.”

The minister was visibly affected and shocked by the passionate words he had just heard from the Rebbe; words that were coming from the depths of his heart. The minister could not

talk and simply ended the meeting by saying that he will have an answer in the next few days and he hopes it will end well.

About ten days passed and word came from the minister of the interior that he should come back. The minister told the Rebbe Maharash that to arrange an audience with the Czar was very difficult. Regarding the situation of the Yidden, however, the government was stating with certainty that from here and on no evil shall befall any of them, anywhere they might live.

Sure enough an edict was passed on to the officials in each district. It warned that if they found anyone stirring up the peace or inflicting physical damage on any citizen that individual would be punished severely.

For the Yidden, they were able to breathe a sigh of relief! 

1. Adapted from Sefer Hamaamorim of the Frieddiker Rebbe, 5710 pages 198-199.