

ONE FAMILY'S SPECIAL EFFORTS IN SPREADING
THE WELLSPRINGS OF CHASSIDUS

PULLING UP THE SHADES

The information in this article, with some minor stylistic variations, first appeared in the recently published book, *Legacy of Resilience, The Remarkable Journey of the Schapiro Family*, by Nuchie Schapiro—ch. 12 and 14.

לעילוי נשמת
ר' שמואל דוד בן הרב יעקב
יוסף ע"ה גורקאוו
נלב"ע י' אלול ה'תשס"א
תנ"צ'ב'ה'

נדפס ע"י בנו
הרה"ת ר' מיכאל יצחק וזוגתו
מרת חנה ומשפחתם שיחיו
גורקאוו

In honor of Yud-Tes Kislev, Rosh Hashanah L'Chassidus, we present the following unique story about Reb Lipa Schapiro and his family's activities in spreading Chassidus throughout Cleveland's post-war Jewish community, with the Rebbe's encouragement and advice. We hope that this story will inspire greater commitment to the task of *yafutzu maayanosecha chutza* and hasten the coming of Moshiach.

Yud-Tes Kislev in Cleveland

After escaping the Soviet Union and spending some time in various cities in Europe, Reb Lipa Schapiro and his family were settled by the Joint Distribution Committee (a leading Jewish humanitarian organization) in Cleveland, Ohio.

In the 5710s, Cleveland's Jewish community comprised approximately 10,000 individuals, with around one-quarter identifying as *frum*. This vibrant community was served by several key shuls, including Shomre Shabbos, Taylor Road Synagogue, and Young Israel of Greater Cleveland. The Hebrew Academy played a significant role in Jewish education, with a student body almost equally comprised of children of refugees and first- and second-generation Americans. Smaller schools, like the Kaliver Yeshiva, also provided a Torah education for local children. Educational institutions like Telz Yeshiva provided a strong foundation in higher learning. As Cleveland adapted to the post-war landscape, *frum* families strove to preserve Yiddishkeit in a rapidly changing world while navigating modern American life.

The Jewish community in Cleveland held Reb Lipa in great esteem. Although he served as a *shochet*, he was regarded as the unofficial *rav* of the Shomre

Shabbos shul on Taylor Road in Cleveland Heights at a time when there was no appointed rabbi. When a *rav* was subsequently appointed and given a *shtender* to the right of the *aron kodesh*, another *shtender* was set up to the left for Reb Lipa.

Instead of traveling to the Rebbe for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Reb Lipa officiated in nearby shuls that lacked an official *rav* or *chazan*. Once in *yechidus*, Reb Lipa remarked to the Rebbe about the strain of davening on these exalted days with many who lacked basic knowledge of davening.

"The fact that they are children of Avraham does not find favor in your eyes?" the Rebbe replied.

One year, when Reb Lipa was asked to be *chazan*



REB LIPA SCHAPIRO WITH HIS FAMILY
SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVING IN CLEVELAND.



A 19 KISLEV FARBRENGEN AT THE
EDDY ROAD SHUL IN CLEVELAND
WITH REB LIPA SPEAKING AT
THE HEAD OF THE TABLE.

on Rosh Hashanah for a shul in a neighboring city, he wrote to the Rebbe for advice. The Rebbe encouraged him to take the position, adding that he should endeavor to speak as many times as possible over Yom Tov, but to keep his sermons short.

As a compliment to his oratory abilities, the Rebbe once said to him from Tehillim, “*Pe’sach picha v’ama-leihu*—Open your mouth wide and I [Hashem] will fill it.”

Reb Lipa organized a big annual Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen at the Eddy Road shul, establishing it as a significant citywide event that attracted many *baalei batim* and *rabbanim* from diverse backgrounds. Reb Lipa served as the main speaker, alongside other local *rabbanim* who were also invited to address the crowd.

Sensitive to the city’s many Litvaks, Reb Lipa used the gentler term “*menagdim*” when recounting the Yud-Tes Kislev story, fostering unity and respect among all who attended.

While still in Cleveland, Reb Lipa’s father-in-law, Reb Zalman Vilenkin, would *chazar a maamar* for the crowd at these farbrengens. He mesmerized the audience with his incredible clarity, explaining even complex concepts in Chassidus in a way that everyone could understand. After he moved to New York, the Rebbe told Reb Lipa, “Now you will have a double responsibility: to speak at the event and to deliver a *maamar*.”

Over the years, Reb Lipa developed a close relationship with Rabbi Yisroel Poras, the esteemed chairman of Cleveland’s *Merkas HoRabbanim*, who served three congregations in Cleveland for nearly five decades. Known as

a prolific *talmid chacham*, Rabbi Poras authored a comprehensive seven-volume set titled *Movoy HaTalmud*.

The Rebbe showed keen interest in Rabbi Poras, often asking for updates about him in *yechidus*.

“I have his *seforim*,” the Rebbe once told Reb Lipa. “Tell him this. I want him to know.”

Rabbi Poras would also speak at the annual Yud-Tes Kislev community event. One year during his talk, he raised an intriguing question: Why did the Alter Rebbe spell the word “*me’od*” with a vov on the front page of Tanya, when in the *possuk* “*Ki Karov*” it is spelled without one? Interestingly, a printer had once “corrected” this so-called error, but the Rebbe later reinserted the vov in his *luach ha’tikkun*.

Several weeks later, when Reb Lipa traveled to New York for Yud Shevat, he stood before the Rebbe in *yechidus*, and the Rebbe asked about the Yud Tes Kislev farbrengen.

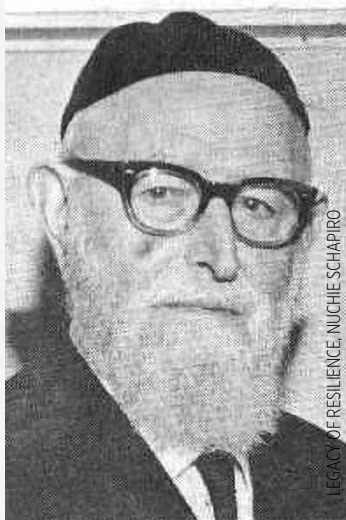
“Was Rabbi Poras there?” the Rebbe asked.

“Yes.”

“Did he speak?”

“Yes.”

“What did he say?”



RABBI YISRAEL PORAS.



REB ZALMAN VILENKIN IN CLEVELAND.



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REB LIPA RECEIVES A BOTTLE OF MASHKE FROM THE REBBE.

Reb Lipa repeated Rabbi Poras's question to the Rebbe, who smiled and responded, "Tell him that we learn from the Gemara that when a *shtar* is written, each word is spelled out *molei* [in full] even if it appears shortened in the Torah."

When he returned home, Reb Lipa quickly contacted Rabbi Poras and communicated the Rebbe's answer.

Chassidim Live In This City

Throughout the years, Reb Lipa occasionally inquired about the possibility of moving to New York, but the

Rebbe insisted that he remain in Cleveland.

"*Vos reisz men zich aher? Doh vert men tzuriben, b'gashmiyus uv'ruchniyus.*" (Why is there pressure to move here [to Crown Heights]? Here one becomes worn down, both physically and spiritually.)

Reb Lipa's direct, incisive way of thinking endeared him to local scholars and the wider community. He understood the various paths of the Jewish community, and people respected him all the more for it. At times, when the Rebbe distributed bottles of *mashke* at farbrengens, Reb Lipa would be given a bottle as a mark of appreciation for his efforts.

Reb Lipa worked hard to implement what the Rebbe once told him: "The community needs to know that there

SHATTERING THE PROBLEM

When the Schapiros lived on Phillips Avenue, their home was across the street from a public school. The younger children slept in the front room of the house, a sunroom that faced the school. One night, a rock came crashing through the front window where the boys slept, shattering glass everywhere. Frightened, the family called the police, who canvassed the area but found nothing.

The police filled out a report, and Reb Lipa found some wood to board up the window. A few nights later, another stone rocketed into the bedroom, covering the terrified children in glass again. The police conducted a much more extensive search but still found nothing.

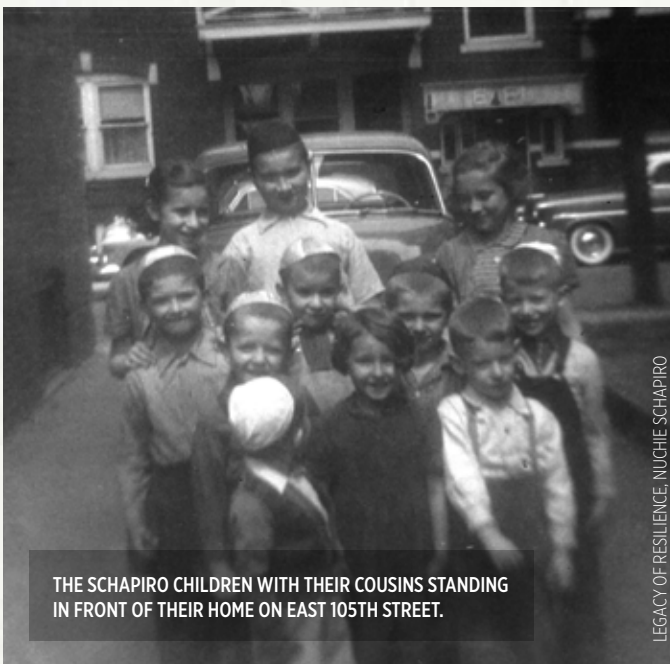
Reb Lipa resolved that family members would take turns staying up to catch the culprits. However, the nights they stayed up, everything was quiet. When they finally chose to sleep, the trouble started again. Even when he immediately ran out the door, Reb Lipa never caught anyone. Exasperated, Reb Lipa wrote about the incident to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe responded by annotating a *michtav kloli-proti* (“general letter”) with three handwritten words: “*Kedai livdok hamzuzos.*” (Check the *mezuzos.*) Indeed, one mezuzah was found to have issues. Reb Lipa replaced it, and the stone throwing stopped.



HARAV BARUCH SOROTZKIN.

LEGACY OF RESILIENCE, NUCHIE SCHAPIRO



THE SCHAPIRO CHILDREN WITH THEIR COUSINS STANDING IN FRONT OF THEIR HOME ON EAST 105TH STREET.

LEGACY OF RESILIENCE, NUCHIE SCHAPIRO



REB LIPA WITH BOCHURIM FROM THE TELZ YESHIVA.

LEGACY OF RESILIENCE, NUCHIE SCHAPIRO

are Chassidim living in the city.”

A former student of Rabbi Yonasan Steif once turned to Reb Lipa when personal issues arose at home. After writing to the Rebbe, all the issues were resolved without further heartache. Feeling profoundly indebted to the Rebbe, the young man traveled to Crown Heights for Simchas Torah.

Through the efforts of Reb Lipa, another young man, Aharon Wohlman, traveled from Cleveland every year to spend Simchas Torah with the Rebbe.

The Highest Standard

The Rebbe wanted Chalav Yisroel to be available in Cleveland, but Reb Lipa faced significant challenges. He had no financial backing for the project, spoke little English, and had only a handful of interested individuals. Despite these obstacles, he remained undeterred. Facilitating Chalav Yisroel was easier said than done, and education was essential, as most *frum* Yidden at the time, including those studying in Telz, did not fully appreciate its importance.

After some research, Reb Lipa traveled to a farm run by a Mr. Greenwald and tried explaining Chalav Yisroel to him in broken English.

“Rabbi, did you come from the moon?” the exasperated farmer said. “This milk is good! What do you want?”

Reb Lipa persisted. With the help of a few friends, the farm agreed to let them *kasher* the equipment. However, water at 212 degrees Fahrenheit was too hot for the machines. During a *yechidus*, Reb Lipa mentioned this obstacle to the Rebbe, adding, “Can we *kasher* the equipment using steam?”

The Rebbe answered in the negative.

“Maybe we can *kasher* at a lower temperature?”

“Nu, do it at 211 degrees,” the Rebbe said.

“We can’t get it that high either.”

“Do it at 210.”

Reb Lipa got the message and didn’t press anymore. Eventually, they were able to figure out a way to *kasher* at the right temperature. Reb Lipa later changed to a different dairy plant, where it was a lot easier to *kasher* the equipment.

During that time, the Rebbe gave Reb Lipa a bottle of *mashke* at a *farbrenge*n and said with a smile, “Mix the *mashke* with milk.”

SAVED FROM DISASTER

When Reb Lipa and his brother Levitche lived with their families in an apartment building on 105th Street, they were located across from a row of stores that included a kosher bakery. Levitche heard that the bakery owner wanted to sell and, sensing a business opportunity, offered to buy the store. The two sides began negotiating a contract of sale. Levitche sent a letter to the Rebbe asking for a *bracha*. To his shock, the Rebbe replied not to go ahead with the purchase.

Everyone was surprised. The deal had seemed promising and was sure to bring a tidy profit. A few weeks later, all the stores on the street went up in flames. The fire burned so strongly that the street was cordoned off, and the fire department evacuated everyone from surrounding buildings. Had the bakery been bought, it would have resulted in a tremendous loss!

The Idea is Paramount

While attending a *sheva brachos* with some members of the Telz Yeshiva faculty, as well as the esteemed Rabbi Eliezer Silver—one of American Jewry’s foremost leaders—Reb Lipa heard his name called.

“Reb Lipa!” Rabbi Silver called out. “Aren’t you going to say a *maamar*? You say it well, with *geshmak*!”

Reb Lipa did not let the opportunity pass. “Rabbi Silver asked me to *chazar* Chassidus,” he announced, and then proceeded to explain a *maamar* to the crowd.

During *yechidus*, Reb Lipa was once asked if he shared Chassidus in shul.

“Yes,” said Reb Lipa. He spoke every Shabbos in the shul of Rabbi Boruch Zuckerman, usually for more than a half-hour.



“Do the Telzer sit there when you are speaking?”

“Yes.”

“You do not need to emphasize that you are saying Chassidus,” the Rebbe said. “*Der inyan darf zich heren.*” (The main thing is that they are hearing Chassidus.) It is less important to specify where the material comes from.”

A Veil Is Lifted

Through Reb Lipa’s position in Cleveland and his *shiurim* with *bochurim* from Telz, he developed a close relationship with Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, the Telz *rosh yeshiva* who taught thousands of students over fifty-five years. As a result, Reb Lipa became somewhat of an intermediary between Rabbi Gifter and the Rebbe.

During a *yechidus*, the Rebbe remarked to Reb Lipa on how Lubavitch and Telz always had a close relationship. “Before the war, Rabbi Shmuel Levitin taught Tanya in the yeshiva.”

Shortly after the Schapiros arrived in Cleveland, Rabbi Gifter sent his son Binyomin to Reb Lipa after school to be tutored in Chumash and Mishnayos. Rabbi Boruch Sorotzkin, a second *rosh yeshiva* in Telz, sent his son, as well.

Binyomin Gifter would later say that, aside from his father wanting him to learn with a *gaon* like Reb Lipa, he also wanted to help give *parnassa* to a new immigrant.

When at a wedding on the Telzer campus, Rabbi Gifter called Reb Lipa over and said, “You know how much we respect the Rebbe? We say that he is among the *gedolei hador*. Recently, I overheard one of our students speaking negatively about the Rebbe. You know what I did? I called him over, scolded him roundly, and told him he should

go to 770, take off his shoes, and accept *nezifa* [a form of rebuke] from the Rebbe.”

“Next time you will be by the Rebbe,” Rabbi Gifter added, “I ask that you tell him this.”

The next time Reb Lipa was in *yechidus*, he told the Rebbe, “I have a *shlichus* from Rabbi Gifter.”

Reb Lipa immediately noticed how the Rebbe leaned all the way back in his chair. (During *yechidus*, the Rebbe sat forward, almost leaning on the desk.) The *mazkir* rang the bell and later opened the door to signal to Reb Lipa to finish, but the Rebbe motioned with his hand not to interrupt anymore. The Rebbe listened with great satisfaction as Reb Lipa repeated his conversation with the *rosh yeshiva*.

After asking for more details, the Rebbe declared, “*Nishta a gresere taanug as s’kumt arop a helem v’hester oif Chassidus.*” (There is no greater pleasure than removing the concealment of Chassidus!)

Reb Lipa taught Tanya classes in his home for Telz bochurim. He recalled, “The yeshiva knew about it; it didn’t bother them. They seemed very happy about it.”

The *bochurim* would also discuss with Reb Lipa what they were learning and came away impressed by his vast knowledge and incisive reasoning.

One year, when the Rebbe distributed Chanukah gelt in 770 to *bochurim* who excelled in learning Chassidus, the Rebbe also sent a package of coins to Reb Lipa for the *bochurim* of Telz who learned Chassidus with him.

This demonstrates how much the Rebbe appreciated the fact that Yidden of all communities learn Chassidus, representing another step in the wellsprings of Chassidus reaching the entire world, towards the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days! **❶**