



לעבן מיט'ן רבין

לזכות  
לזכות שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר  
בכל קצוי תבל להצלחה רבה ומופלגה  
למעלה מן המשוער  
נדפס ע"י  
הרה"ת ר' דוד ומרת חנה  
ויגלר  
פאלם ביטש גארדענס, פלארידא



CIRCA 5702-5706, JEF 287283

*“I felt that my father  
had passed on”*

CHOF MENACHEM-AV 5704



In honor of Chof Av, yom histalkus of the Rebbe's father - HoRav Levi Yitzchok Schneerson, we present our readership with an account of the period surrounding Chof Av 5704 in the Rebbe's presence.

This narrative is based mostly on a description of these events in the book Yemei Melech vol 2, in addition to other sources.

It should be noted that the content of this article slightly differs from this column's usual style, in that the story takes place during the lifetime of the Frierdiker Rebbe.

## STRENUOUS EFFORTS

As World War II was nearing its end in the winter of 5704, the Rebbe made numerous attempts in renewing contact with his parents, who were stuck in exile in Chi'ili, Kazakhstan, due to Harav Levi Yitzchok's 'counter-revolutionary activity' of spreading Yiddishkeit. Harav Levi Yitzchok was in extremely poor health at the time. After discovering their whereabouts, the Rebbe managed to send several food packages, to an extent easing their suffering. The Rebbe also tirelessly endeavored to arrange visas for their departure from the Soviet Union to Eretz Yisroel.

Meanwhile, Chassidim in nearby Alma Ata resolved to secure the Rav's release. They contributed thousands of rubles, giving up most of their wealth, in order to acquire the proper permits for their relocation. After six weeks fraught with setbacks and obstacles, they were finally able to obtain the release documents.

Immediately after Pesach, Harav Levi Yitzchok and Rebbetzin Chana left Chi'ili and arrived in Alma Ata. In this large city, their living conditions improved somewhat, yet, through the summer, the Rav's illness grew worse.

On Chof Av, Harav Levi Yitzchok's condition turned critical, and that evening he returned his pure *neshama* to its Maker.

## DREADFUL NEWS

Several days after the *levaya*, a telegram arrived in Brooklyn, New York, informing the Rebbe of the heartbreaking news.

Reb Leibel Bistritzky a"h, a student in 770 at the time, later related the following account: The telegram informing the Rebbe of the grim news was initially delivered to the group of *bochurim* studying at 770. They decided to wait for the Rebbe's arrival to inform him, as he used to arrive every day at a set hour from his workplace. That day however, he hadn't arrived. Upon telephoning the Rebbe's home, the Rebbetzin relayed that he had left for work as usual. They proceeded to call the workplace, and were told that the Rebbe hadn't appeared that day. They then approached the Rebbe's room, noticing

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the key in the hole, inserted from the inside. After they knocked, the Rebbe opened the door for them.

Upon hearing the heart-rending news, the Rebbe tore *kriah*. When asked why he hadn't gone to work that day, the Rebbe replied that: "When I woke up this morning, I felt that my father had passed on... I therefore remained in my room... I understood that the news will arrive sooner or later."

The Rebbe immediately telegraphed Colel Chabad in Yerushalayim with a message informing of his father's passing and asking that they say Kaddish and learn Mishnayos in his memory, and pray for his mother's wellbeing:



(Since its founding by the Alter Rebbe in 5548 (תקמ"ח), Colel Chabad has provided a Kaddish-recital service, as well as that of a *minyan* davening for someone's wellbeing, upon request, at Kever Dovid in Yerushalayim.)

## CONSOLATION LETTER FROM THE FRIEDIKER REBBE

The Friediker Rebbe, who was then receiving medical treatment at the Aurora Health Resort in Morristown, New Jersey, was only notified about Reb Levik's passing after the *shiva*. Upon hearing the sad news, he immediately sent a letter to the Rebbe, dated 4 Elul 5704:

My dear and beloved son-in-law [the Rebbe's name] *shlita*...

I was just informed of the great tragedy that has befallen, with the passing of my relative and *mechutan*, your revered father. I share your great pain, *hamakom yenacheim eschem*...

The Frierdiker Rebbe then described the *minhagei aveilus* as observed by the Rebbe Rashab after his father's *histalkus*. This included his *sefer limud*, his *minhag* regarding *aliyos*, and the number of *kaddeshim* he would recite.

He then proceeded to relay an interesting anecdote from when the Rebbe Rashab was sitting *shiva* for his mother, Rebbetzin Rivka:

During the *aveilus* for my grandmother in 5672 (תער"ב), my father [the Rebbe Rashab] would *lein* from the Torah all throughout the *shloshim* period, up until Pesach, as long as he was outside of Lubavitch, after which he ceased to do so. He later intimated his regret on discontinuing this *minhag*.

The Frierdiker Rebbe then ended off with a *bracha*:

Hashem should strengthen the health of my *mechuteiniste*, your esteemed mother *tichye*, and may she experience sweet, good, long, and healthy days, *b'gashmiyus uv'ruchniyus*. And may Hashem strengthen your health, together with that of your wife *tichye*, *b'gashmiyus uv'ruchniyus*.

Your father-in-law, who loves you to no end, and blesses you with a *ksiva vachasima tova b'gashmiyus uv'ruchniyus*.<sup>1</sup>

The following day, the Frierdiker Rebbe discussed the same subject (his father's conduct during *aveilus*) at greater length and shared several additional *hanhagos*. It can be assumed that this *sicha* was said to the Rebbe, who had just arrived at the health resort, following the *shiva*.<sup>2</sup>

### MINIMAL CORRESPONDENCE

In the days that followed, the Rebbe abstained from penning and answering letters. In one letter dated 10 Elul 5704—the earliest we have following his learning of Harav Levi Yitzchok's *histalkus*—the Rebbe excuses himself for not responding earlier, as this was the earliest opportunity after his father's passing.

Over the course of the ensuing months, the Rebbe curtailed his responses to those who wrote

him. In a letter dated 23 Teves 5705, the Rebbe explains:

“For some time now, I haven't been answering your letters, as well as those of others, due to the tragedy that befell me, with my father's passing.”

### WRITE-UP BY THE MECHUTAN

Meanwhile, the Frierdiker Rebbe anonymously penned an obituary of sorts about his *mechutan*, Harav Levi Yitzchok, in *Kovetz Lubavitch*<sup>3</sup> (booklet 4, p. 62). In it, he detailed the Rav's illustrious lineage, great scholarship in both *nigleh* and *primitiyus haTorah*, and his dedication to *avodas haklal* under the [Frierdiker] Rebbe's auspices, ultimately leading to his exile and passing in Kazakhstan.

It seems that the reason the write-up was anonymous, with few details on the period toward the end of Harav Levi Yitzchok's life, was in order to protect Rebbetzin Chana from the attention of the authorities. She was still in *galus* behind the Iron Curtain, leaving only later that year on a roundabout journey through Moscow, Poland, France, and eventually, some two years later, the United States.

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### A MOVING ENCOUNTER

Rabbi Yitzchok Dovid Groner a”h, who was studying in 770 at the time, related:

On Rosh Hashanah 5705, the Rebbe recited *chatzi-kaddish* following *krias haTorah* at the Frierdiker Rebbe's *minyán*. This was the Frierdiker Rebbe's first time hearing the Rebbe say *kaddish* for his father, and in the midst of it all, the two of them burst into tears.

### HINTS AND INSIGHTS

Amongst the letters the Rebbe sent throughout the following year, many allusions as to his father's *histalkus* can be found. In a letter written in response to Reb Volf Greenglass's *nichum-aveilim*,





the Rebbe thanks him for his wishes, and explains the meaning of *nichum aveilim* according to Chassidus.

In his letter of *nichumin*, Reb Volf noted that the Rebbe's work in Machne Yisroel and Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, as well as the other tasks entrusted to him by the Friediker Rebbe, is essentially *techiyas hameisim*, reviving those who are "lifeless" without Chassidus.

To that the Rebbe responded that he'll "spice up" Reb Volf's words, penning a magnificent piece in which he explains the four levels in afterlife and *techiyas hameisim*, corresponding to the four missions the Friediker Rebbe entrusted him with: 1) Otzar HaChassidim (Chassidus), 2) Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch (Education), 3) Machne Yisroel, and 4) *Chevra kadisha*.

### ONE MINUTE – LIKE AN ENTIRE YEAR

Throughout that year, the Rebbe davened at the *amud*.

Chassidim who spent the year of *aveilus* in the Rebbe's presence witnessed many noteworthy *hanhagos*:

1. The Rebbe would enter *shacharis* every morning at precisely nine o'clock.
2. Rabbi Leibel Posner recalls that when saying the *beraisa* of 'Rabi Yishmael,' the Rebbe could be heard mouthing the words 'מכלל ופרט ומפרט וכלל,' the first with a 'fei' and the second with a 'pei,' as printed in the *siddur*.
3. Rabbi Posner continues that the Rebbe would only begin davening following the

*gabbai's* bang on the *bima*. The same was true with *chazaras hashatz*.

4. On weekdays (Mondays and Thursdays) the Rebbe would *lein* from the Torah.

5. Initially the Rebbe didn't *lein* on Shabbos, as noted by Reb Mottel Sharfstein a"h. However, Reb Berel Alenick a"h related that in the summer of 5705, the Rebbe began arranging an early *mincha minyan* following *seudas Shabbos* upstairs with the Frierdiker Rebbe, where he would *lein*.

The Rebbe later wrote<sup>4</sup> that "due to a private reason, I *leined* from the Torah only at Shabbos *mincha*, as well as Mondays and Thursdays."

Rabbi Leibel Posner relates that several times, there was no *minyan* upon the Rebbe's entry in tallis and tefillin, at precisely nine o'clock. The Rebbe was extremely disheartened, telling the *bochurim* present: "Call me when there are ten *mispallelim*..." When the Frierdiker Rebbe heard about this, he conveyed that all should take care to begin on time, because with Ramash (as the Rebbe was called then), a minute is like a year!

A similar event transpired one evening, when the Rebbe entered *zal* and asked the *mashgiach* when *seder* will end for the night, as he wished to daven *maariv* with the *bochurim*. The *mashgiach* answered: "Ten to fifteen minutes after..." Upon hearing this, the Rebbe asked when *exactly maariv* would be, as five minutes are extremely precious to him!<sup>5</sup>

Reb Sholom Chaskind related that in the period following the *shiva*, the Frierdiker Rebbe voiced the following to his father, Reb Alter Dovber (Berel), upon the latter's visit in Aurora Health Resort: "Please see to it that he [the Rebbe] should have a punctual *minyan*, as he doesn't eat anything before davening."

6. The Rebbe did not attend any weddings throughout the entire *aveilus*.

### DETERMINING THE EXACT DATE

On 23 Teves 5705, the Rebbe penned the following letter<sup>6</sup>:

"To the honorable administration of Colel Chabad in Yerushalayim, led by the esteemed *gaon*, Rabbi Shlomo Yehuda Leib Eliezrov..."

"I received your *nichum* letter, and awaited a response as to the possibility of determining the exact day my father מ"ה passed away, but alas, I haven't yet received any such information. The telegram was sent from there on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 23 Menachem-Av.

(The Rebbe's communication with his parents who were in exile was going through Eretz Yisroel, and they were also the ones to send the telegram with the grim news. The Rebbe continues:)

"I thank you from the depths of my heart for the set *seder* of Torah and *tefillah l'ilui nishmas* my father מ"ה, as well as that for my mother's health and welfare, may she live many long, good years."

The Rebbe then continued with an explanation of the above based on Chassidus, concluding with a postscript: "Please notify me of all the costs the above entailed."

Indeed, in a letter written later that year, the Rebbe writes: "B"H, 21 Menachem-Av, the day following my father's *yahrtzeit*, 5705."

In that same letter, the Rebbe requests to "please give, in connection with the *yahrtzeit*... one hundred dollars to Colel Chabad, and eighteen dollars to Yeshivas Toras Emes, I have deposited their equivalent here. Also twenty-five to the worldwide Tehillim society."

On that day, the Rebbe penned an additional, lengthy letter to the administration of Colel Chabad, in connection with the *yahrtzeit*, explaining the day's significance as related to the *neschama* of the *nistalek*, especially *tzadikkim*.

The Rebbe ended off with a request to daven for his mother's health and wellbeing, and a *bracha*:

לאלתר לתשובה לאלתר לגאולה. T

1. For full text of the letter, see *Igros Kodesh* Vol. 3 p. 7-8.

2. For the complete *hanacha*, see *Sefer Hasichos* 5704 p. 160-161.

3. See *Kovetz Lubavitch: Rebirth in a New World*, Derher Elul 5775.

4. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 17 p. 271.

5. As recorded by Rabbi Dovid Dubov.

6. Printed in *Igros Kodesh* vol. 2 p. 22-23.

7. For a comprehensive overview of this term, see Derher Adar 5775.