

The Life of a Chossid

Reb Pesach Molostovker

Passed away: Kislev 5631.

Chossid of: The Alter Rebbe,
Mitteler Rebbe, Tzemach Tzedek.

Our Rebbeim often emphasized the importance of telling and hearing stories of Chassidim as a means of bettering our own lives.¹ Being a Chossid isn't just being exemplary in any one area, rather it is a lifelong effort to improve in every part of one's avoda. We have a lot to learn from the Chassidim of previous generations. This column is not meant to be a comprehensive biography on the life of the Chassidim that we are covering; it is an opportunity to have a glimpse into their lives so we can improve our lives as Chassidim. This takes on many areas such as hiskashrus, ahavas Yisroel, davening, mesirus nefesh and kabbolas ol. With these stories and anecdotes, we have attempted to highlight these areas.

Reb Pesach was a Chossid of three Rebbeim: The Alter Rebbe, the Mitteler Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek.

He was widely acclaimed for his ability to teach Chassidus in a clear and captivating manner, such that his listeners would be motivated into action. As a rule, he was strict about teaching Chassidus only to his *talmidim*.

Reb Pesach was commonly known as Pesach Molostovker, a reference to his hometown. He owned a mill, but his primary “profession” was clearly his being a devoted Chossid.

Living the Lesson

Reb Pesach was a passionate teacher of Chassidus, especially the concept of *bitul hayesh*. What made him stand out as an exceptional teacher was his ability to help his student take the concept he was teaching, *bitul*, from an intellectual idea to tangible reality. This is demonstrated in an incident that took place with one of his *talmidim*:

Walking down the Russian streets, possibly after a curfew, a Russian police officer called out, “*Kta idyot?*” (“Who is walking?”) to which the *talmid* naturally replied, “*Bitul idyot?*” (“*Bitul* is walking!”)

This concept that he learned from Reb Pesach was so deeply ingrained in him, to the extent that this was his honest reply.²

From Kislev תקפ”ח, following the *histalkus* of the Mitteler Rebbe, until Shavuos of that same year, the Tzemach Tzedek did not yet accept the *nesius*.

For Shavuos, many Chassidim came to Lubavitch and returned home through Dubrovna. One of these Chassidim was Reb Pesach Molostovker. In Dubrovna they met Reb Nechemiah³ who told them that he dreamt of the Alter Rebbe and understood that he needs to go to Lubavitch. Right then and there, this group of *eltere Chassidim* decided to return to Lubavitch with him. On that Shabbos the Tzemach Tzedek said Chassidus three times and from then on the *eltere Chassidim* became *mekusharim* of the Tzemach Tzedek.

After the *histalkus* of the Mitteler Rebbe, the older Chassidim took upon themselves to encourage the Chassidim to be *mekusharim*. They divided the country, each receiving an area where to travel. Reb Pesach was part of this group and also received an area.

Years later, the Rebbe Rashab told the Friediker Rebbe that this is the real *avoda* of Chassidus—to be *me'orer* other Chassidim even though they knew that personally they weren't yet at the ideal level of *hiskashrus*. Working for three years, explaining and teaching the younger Chassidim to connect themselves to the Rebbe with a true *pnimiyusdiker hiskashrus*, in turn brought out the true *hiskashrus* in the elder Chassidim as well.⁴

Be prepared!

Reb Pesach was once in *yechidus* by the Tzemach Tzedek, when the Rebbe asked him, “Reb Pesach, what do you do before davening?”

He replied that he follows what the Alter Rebbe writes in Likkutei Torah that one should go to mikvah, give tzedakah, and learn Zohar.

The Tzemach Tzedek told him, “Regarding Zohar, my grandfather (referring to the Alter Rebbe) explained that this means studying Chassidus.”⁵

A Journey for Amens

Being a great *oved*—one who focuses intently on the *avoda* of *tefilah* through contemplation and meditation—Reb Pesach would daven for hours on end. In his old age, he wasn't physically capable of continuing this practice so instead he would travel around from *minyán* to *minyán* and answer *amen, borchu*, etc.

The Soldier or his Uniform?

Czar Nikolai the First once let it be known that he was to visit one of his regiments the next day and expected them to be in perfect order. The soldiers prepared anxiously, well aware that nothing less than perfect would be tolerated. It was a hot day and with all the running around to be ready, one of the soldiers felt the need to jump into the nearby river for a quick swim. Much to his dismay, the trumpets announcing the Czar's arrival sounded before he had a chance to put his uniform back on. Making a quick decision, he joined the ranks as he was, dripping wet and completely naked.

Needless to say, the Czar was not amused and asked the soldier why he had not prepared properly. The soldier replied, "Your Excellency, who serves you—me or my clothing?" The Czar was quite impressed with the answer and exclaimed with the typical Russian "Bravo!"

Reb Pesach saw in this a fundamental lesson in our *avodas Hashem*. When we make a sincere self reckoning before davening and realize that our "garments" (thought, speech, and action) are not where they should be, we need to keep in mind that the essence of our *neshama* is always pure and it is with this that we come before Hashem to daven.⁶

Reb Pesach once related about himself, "Throughout the year I collect all my questions that arise in Chassidus so that when I go into *yechidus* I can ask the Rebbe. However, the moment I enter the Rebbe's room all my questions vanish and I have all the answers I need."

Reb Shmuel Gronem once explained this phenomenon: "Questions are sourced in *kelipa*; in the Rebbe's room *Elokus* is revealed, so when Reb Pesach would enter and his *neshama* would feel *Elokus*, all the questions disappeared."⁷

His exceptional dedication to davening was well known and even the *misnagdim* in his town recognized its specialty. This did not sit well with them and out of great jealousy they decided to stop him. They arranged, through the powers of black magic, that he should start having sinful thoughts. Reb Pesach was deeply disturbed by this and turned to the Alter Rebbe for help. The Alter Rebbe immediately understood that these thoughts were coming to him through the power of *kelipa*.

The Alter Rebbe took an apple, stared at it briefly, and handed it to Reb Pesach, telling him to say that he doesn't want it. Reb Pesach replied, "How can I say I don't want it, if I really do?"

The Alter Rebbe took the apple a second time and the scene repeated itself. By the third time Reb Pesach said, "Now I truly don't want it!" The Alter Rebbe then gave him the apple, he took a bite and was cured from his sinful thoughts.⁸

For the Sake of Another

Running for her life, a young girl was racing breathlessly away from her ruthless Cossack pursuers. Watching this

horrendous scene was Reb Pesach, who immediately leaped into action to save her, completely disregarding his own safety.

Being a strong and well built man, he chased off the few Cossacks who were threatening the girl but they quickly regrouped and returned with backup. They were now out for revenge and for blood; Reb Pesach's blood. Being no match for the oncoming attackers, he ran into a courtyard full of barrels and hid under one of them.

When the Cossacks searched the area and couldn't find him, they began beating and spearing the barrels with their weapons with the hope that they would beat Reb Pesach no matter where he was hiding. To an extent they were successful as Reb Pesach did indeed sustain a severe injury to his head and suffered constant headaches as a result.

When he went to the Alter Rebbe and told him about his pains, the Alter Rebbe placed his hands on Reb Pesach's head and the pain disappeared. After the *histalkus* of the Alter Rebbe, the pains returned. He went to the Mittlerer Rebbe and the same thing happened. This repeated itself a third time with the Tzemach Tzedek as well.

Quick Facts

- The Tzemach Tzedek would send Chassidim just to "sit" and observe the special conduct of Reb Pesach.⁹
- The Rebbe's father, Horav Levi Yitzchok Schneerson, was a *talmid* of Reb Yoel Chaikin. Reb Yoel had learned under the guidance of Reb Pesach.¹⁰
- Reb Pesach was very talented and well versed in *niggunim*. Each year before Shavuot, he would send a newly composed *niggun* to Reb Hiller Paritcher. Reb Hillel would arrange for a *niggun* to be sung before the Rebbe said a *maamar* and thereafter. Reb Pesach's *niggun* was one of these.

1. See *Telling it Like it Is—Darkei Hachassidus*, Derher, Iyar 5776.

2. This story was repeated numerous times by the Rebbe. See: *sichos* Yud-Tes Kislev 5698; Yud-Tes Kislev 5716, et. al.

3. Reb Nechemiah Dubrovner was a great Chossid and incredible *ga'on*, married to the Alter Rebbe's granddaughter.

4. Sefer Hasichos 5691, p. 245.

5. *L'Sheima Oizen* (Duchman), 202.

6. Teshura, Rot, Kislev 5764.

7. *Lmaan Yeidu* (Schusterman), p. 269

8. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

9. Reshimas Hayoman, p. 22.

10. Kovetz Lubavitch p. 62.

מוקדש
לחיוזוק ההתקשרות לכ"ק אדמו"ר
נדפס ע"י ולזכות
הרה"ת ר' שמואל אהרן וזוגתו מרת חנה
ובניהם שניאור זלמן, מנחם מענדל,
דוד ואליהו שיחיו
נובק