



Downfall of a Rasha

In Czarist Russia, the law required every male to serve a tour of duty for the country. This was obviously a terrible prospect for young Jewish men and they did anything they could to get out of this.

The Tzemach Tzedek bought bonds for each of his grandchildren with each bond valued at 500 ruble. This was the sum it would cost them years later to secure an exemption from military service.

The Rebbe Rashab's brother, the Raza, was not physically fit to serve so although he had cashed in his bond money, he received it back. The Rebbe Rashab, however, could not find a way out of military service so he sold the bond to secure a pass.

The governor of the Vitebsk region in which the Rebbe Maharash and his family were registered was a man by the name of

Vierevkin. He had his eyes set on a Schneerson; what a victory it would be if only just one Schneerson served in the Russian army. He knew that if any member of the illustrious Schneerson family was conscripted into the army, many other Jews would follow suit.

He was so determined to make this happen that he was even ready to offer certain concessions for the Rebbe Rashab, such as ensuring the uniform be *shaatnez* free and allowing him to live in a regular house while the rest of the soldiers stayed in the army barracks.

Unfortunately, Vierevkin was in a powerful enough position to push through this agenda. He requested permission for this plan from his superiors in the Mohilev region, which was where the Schneerson family actually lived even though they were registered

in Vitebsk. They responded that they would not interfere but they would also not assist him in any way.

That was good enough for Vierevkin. He quickly dispatched soldiers to Lubavitch with the draft letter in their hands.

As the net was beginning to spread over the Rebbe Rashab, his father, the Rebbe Maharash put a rescue plan into place. He summoned his driver Ivan just 45 minutes before the messengers arrived.

He told Ivan to hastily prepare for a journey. He then gave him very specific instructions, "You should quickly travel to Husyan, which will take approximately an hour and a half; travel speedily even if the horses will die from exertion.

"After that, continue traveling for two kilometers past the city of Smolensk.

The entire trip should take you close to four hours."

The Rebbe Maharash told the Rebbe Rashab and another Chossid to sit in an due to the winter cold raging outside.

Upon arriving in Smolensk, Ivan returned as instructed, however, his horses had died and could not make the journey. The Rebbe Maharash gave him ten ruble as compensation.

With the Rebbe Rashab safely hidden, the Rebbe Maharash made the necessary preparations back at home. The courtyard of the Rebbe had four guards protecting it at all times; two were stationed inside the courtyard and two right outside.

That day, the Rebbe Maharash instructed the guards to turn away anyone who came, by telling them that the instructions were not to open the gate until six in the morning. Indeed,

לע"נ
 הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' אברהם דוב
 בן הרב יהושע ע"ה
 נלב"ע כ"ד טבת ה'תשע"ג
 ולע"נ
 זוגתו מרת ליבא בת ר' ברוך ע"ה
 נלב"ע כ"א טבת ה'תשס"ד
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.
 נדפס ע"י
 הרה"ת ר' אליהו זוגתו מרת דליה
 ומשפחתם שיחיו
 העכט
 לאורך ימים ושנים טובות
 ובריאות ולהצלחה רבה ומופלגה
 בעבודת השליחות בגשמיות וברוחניות

the law was that it was forbidden to conduct a search on the house of an honorary citizen in the middle of the night.

As expected, the soldiers of the governor arrived that night but were informed that they would have to return in the morning.

The officer and his men showed up again at nine, however, the Rebbe Maharash told them that he would not be able to see them until twelve noon.

When they finally went in to the Rebbe's room, the officer explained that he needed to conduct a search of the property.

The Rebbe Maharash replied, "Nu, search. Generally they don't search me. I am accustomed to them asking me questions and acting upon my word."

The officer asked the Rebbe Maharash if he knew who had sent him.

"Yes, I know who he is," he responded. "But does he know who I am? I will be in Vitebsk and deal with him directly. Now you can search!" With that the Rebbe Maharash left the room and went out to the sukkah.

Indeed, the governor thought he knew exactly who he was dealing with but things wouldn't turn out the way he had planned.

The governor of Mohilev would periodically travel through his provinces to check out the different villages and cities under his jurisdiction. This time, he made the trip earlier than usual and diverted to Lubavitch. He met the Rebbe Maharash and told him the whole scheme of the governor of Vitebsk and the response he had given him.

The Rebbe Maharash traveled to Vitebsk together with four or five Chassidim. They went to visit the governor in his office where he greeted people (not in his home). The governor, Vierevkin, greeted them warmly. When he heard why they had come he replied, "The decree regarding the drafting of your son was made in Petersburg and therefore only they can make the decision for it to be annulled. I am just following orders I received from my superiors there."

The next day the same thing happened again. At

the conclusion of the second meeting, the governor requested that the Rebbe Maharash visit him a third time but on this occasion it should be in his private home.

Vierevkin was a short tempered man, and when the Rebbe Maharash arrived at his house and duly informed him that "my son will NOT serve in the army," he flew into a rage and began saying harsh things.

The Rebbe Maharash told him, "This very evening I am travelling to Petersburg. Tomorrow night I will arrive and on the third day from now I will be meeting with ministers and officials to annul the decree against my son. If they don't agree to do this, I will be left with one choice. I will pack up all my belongings and take my family to Eretz Yisroel. I am requesting that you prepare the paperwork that I will need for this trip; if, however, it us up to you, rescind the edict and don't force me to make

this journey because you will pay a heavy price. I am giving you until I leave on my trip."

The governor responded coolly, "Budtye zdaroveh!" (Be well).

The Rebbe Maharash travelled to Petersburg and spent a few days there.

After doing some research he discovered that in the Mohilev-Vitebsk region Jews were not avoiding army duty as Vierevkin had claimed. After some effort, the Rebbe Maharash was able to accomplish his mission and have the decree annulled.

On his journey home, the Rebbe Maharash went through Vitebsk and repeated a *maamar*. In middle of the *maamar* he said the words "the plague started" which seemed to have no connection at all to the subject matter being explained. Following this, he journeyed back to Lubavitch.

Immediately after this, Vierevkin became very sick, causing him to suffer terribly. His wife sent a messenger to Lubavitch begging for forgiveness. A short time later he died, and many Yidden were spared from this *rasha*. **T**

(Based on Reshimas Hayoman p. 200)