

לזכות
הרה"ת ר' לוי יצחק
ומרת אסתר ביילא ומשפחתם שיחיו
חאנאוויטש



FIRE and PASSION

REB LEIBEL RASKIN

Special thanks to Reb Leibel's sons, Rabbi Yitzchok Raskin of Vermont and Rabbi Hirshel Raskin of Montreal, who assisted in the preparation of this article.

REB LEIBEL ADDRESSES THE
KINUS TZACH, 18 TISHREI 5741.



***A Chossid first,
everything else second.***

As a young bochur in Eretz Yisroel, during his years by the Rebbe, on Shlichus in the distant world of Morocco, and even in the face of significant physical challenges, Reb Leibel Raskin's chayus and dedication to the Rebbe defined his existence.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 191328

Reb Leibel Raskin was born in 5693 (תרצ"ג) in Leningrad, Soviet Russia. During the war, his family escaped to Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan. There his father, Reb Yaakov Yosef Raskin, merited to be instrumental in bringing the Rebbe's parents, Horav Levi Yitzchok and Rebbetzin Chana, from their place of exile in Chi'yily to Alma-Ata, where they spent several months in relative comfort. The Raskin brothers had the opportunity to spend time with Horav Levi Yitzchok, and to come to his assistance in many ways before his *histalkus* on Chof Av.

After Reb Levik's *histalkus*, the KGB began harassing Reb Yaakov Yosef, and he was forced to flee the city. The Raskin children spread out to different locations, until they were able to obtain fake Polish passports and leave the country in the "Great Escape" of 5707.¹

His Own Man

After a period of time in the Pocking DP camp and in Paris, the Friediker Rebbe instructed Reb Yaakov Yosef to immigrate to Eretz Yisroel. He

planned on taking his youngest son Leibel with him, while the older boys, Dovid and Sholom Ber, would remain learning in Brunoy, France. Leibel protested. He was already fifteen-years-old, and he deserved to remain with his friends in yeshiva as well. When his father objected, he proposed a bold solution—he would write to the Friediker Rebbe!

In those days, it was unheard of for a young *bochur* to write directly to the Rebbe. Correspondence was always done through mature adults, especially in those years when the Friediker Rebbe's health needed to be taken into account.

Some time later, he received a response. The Friediker Rebbe instructed him to join his parents in Eretz Yisroel, and enroll either in Toras Emes or Tomchei Temimim.

The Telegram

Leibel arrived in Eretz Yisroel after Purim 5709 and enrolled in the yeshiva in Tel Aviv, first under the tutelage of Reb Chaim Shaul Bruk and later under Reb Shlomo Chaim Kesselman. Their

Horav Levi Yitzchok and Rebbetzin Chana

In his JEM interview, Reb Leibel related his memories of Horav Levi Yitzchok [printed in Derher Magazine, Av 5775]:

"Horav Levi Yitzchok would often sit and speak for hours at a time, sometimes taking a person's name and explaining its inner meaning with *gematrios*, etc. As I was a young child, I usually did not understand his words.

"There was one occasion, however, when I did understand his message:

"In Alma-Ata we had a shul located in a cellar, and he came to daven there on Shavuot [5704]. After davening he delivered a *drasha*. It was a speech that even we—young children—were able to understand.

"He spoke about *matan Torah*. His speech was directed primarily to the children, saying that we need to know that we should not be *nispaal* from anything around us, we need to grow in *limmud haTorah* and fulfilling *mitzvos*, and not be afraid of anyone; our will must be the Aibershter's will. He spoke very clearly, elucidating his idea very well. Since I was a young child, I do not remember all the details, but his main message was that we must behave in a way that even our fear of the government will not hinder our activities."

Rebbetzin Chana When Leibel arrived in New York, his brother Reb Dovid Raskin brought him to visit Rebbetzin Chana. Throughout his years in New York and later, he merited to return for visits and to assist Rebbetzin Chana in several ways. (For example, he participated in *bedikas chametz* in the Rebbetzin's home.)

The first time he visited after moving on Shlichus to Morocco, Rebbetzin Chana stood up to greet him. "*Vos mach ihr*," she asked.

The honorific title "*ihr*" surprised Reb Leibel, and he asked the Rebbetzin why she chose to address him so.

"What do you mean," Rebbetzin Chana replied, "*Du bist mein zun, der Rebbe's a Shliach*, you are the Shliach of my son, the Rebbe."

Reb Leibel's brother, Reb Dovid, related that Rebbetzin Chana would often give him "*A grus fun dein bruder—regards from your brother.*" The Rebbe would share stories about Reb Leibel's shlichus in Morocco with Rebbetzin Chana, and she in turn, would share them with Reb Dovid.

material state had what to be desired, but the *bochurim* thrived in a truly *chassidische* atmosphere.

On Motzei Shabbos Parshas Bo the following year, Reb Leibel later related, the *bochurim* fabrenge throughout the night. Their colleague, 20-year-old Yoel Kahan, was to embark the next morning on a voyage to 770, to learn by the Frierdiker Rebbe.

In the morning, when Reb Shlomo Chaim arrived at the yeshiva, a *yungerman* called him into a side room to share some important news. From the *zal*, the *bochurim* overheard Reb Shlomo Chaim cry out, “It can’t be; it’s impossible!”

The media had reported that the Frierdiker Rebbe was *nistalek* on Shabbos in New York. Nevertheless, Reb Shlomo Chaim wasn’t sure of the report’s validity, because no official telegram had been received from 770. As it turned out, the telegram had been addressed to Reb Moshe Gurary, who was away at the port in Chaifa to see off his son Nosson and his friend Yoel on their way to New York.

“In those days,” Reb Leibel related in his JEM interview, “communication with New York wasn’t the best, but we nevertheless heard from the *bochurim* in 770 that they had accepted the Rebbe’s *nesius*. Thank G-d, we were inspired by their *hiskashrus*, and we also got very involved in *hiskashrus*.”

“This attitude grew stronger after my brother Dovid wrote to us about the Rebbe’s *farbrenge* with the *bochurim* on Beis Iyar 5710.² We would sit for nights, reading the *sichos* again and again, and saying *lchaim* with the fervent wish that we merit to go to the Rebbe very soon.

“Meanwhile, we had to suffice with letters. The Rebbe would answer our *panim* at special times of the year, like Rosh Hashanah, with a letter with his holy signature, and that only heightened our resolve to travel to the Rebbe some day.”

“We have a Rebbe!”

“Several days after Yud Shevat 5711, a letter arrived from Gedalia Korf, in which he described the events of Yud Shevat; he related that the Rebbe had said a *maamar* ‘Basi Legani.’

“When I read the letter, I immediately ran over to Reb Shlomo Chaim to share the news.

“‘Azoi?’ he said, ‘The Rebbe said a *maamar*? Where is ‘Itche’s’?’



RASKIN FAMILY / MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE REBBE

THE RASKIN FAMILY IN THE DP CAMP IN POKING, GERMANY, CIRCA 5707. A YOUNG REB LEIBEL IS ON THE TOP LEFT.



RASKIN FAMILY / MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE REBBE

REB LEIBEL (L), HIS BROTHER REB DOVID (R), AND THEIR FATHER REB YAAKOV YOSEF (C).

“Reb Leizer Gurevitch, the son of Reb Itche der Masmid, was our *mashgiach* for *nigleh*. Reb Shlomo Chaim gave me five *livot* to buy *mashke*, and instructed us to bang on the table and announce the conclusion of *seder*. Reb Leizer looked quizzically at Reb Shlomo Chaim, and Reb

Shlomo Chaim called out, ‘*Mir hoben a Rebbe*—we have a Rebbe!’

“The farbrengen lasted late into the night. Reb Shlomo Chaim encouraged us to all say *l’chaim*, and the boisterous singing ultimately disturbed the neighbors. When they came to find out what the noise was about, Reb Shlomo Chaim called out to them, ‘*Mir hoben a Rebbe!*’”

Daehak V’niehmas

The *bochurim* received letters from their colleagues in New York about life near the Rebbe, and they desperately wished to join. Several *bochurim* wrote to the Rebbe asking for permission, yet for the most part the Rebbe’s answer was in the negative. The Rebbe wrote that there was much to be achieved in Eretz Yisroel, and the *bochurim* therefore had no justification for weakening the yeshiva and traveling to the United States.

Leibel too, asked for permission, and he received the Rebbe’s permission to apply for a visa. Later, when he wrote to the Rebbe about the various difficulties in obtaining one, he received a unique letter³ in response.

In the letter, the Rebbe repeated his opinion that much can be accomplished in Eretz Yisroel, and that nevertheless Leibel had written to the Rebbe about coming to the United States numerous times, through numerous channels. The Rebbe then wrote the following:

“If, after all of the above, you still desire to travel here, it is well-known that there is a method called ‘*dachak v’niehmas*’ (although it is not always appropriate and not applicable to everyone); you can speak to Aguch who will surely help you in this regard.”

Directly to the Top

Reb Leibel had the Rebbe’s permission to come, but he was of draft age—20 years old—and needed a permit from the Ministry of Defense to absolve him of army-duty. For several months, he tried the regular channels but to no avail. They weren’t willing to allow him to leave the country.

In desperation, he decided on a bold move. He wrote letters to the president, the prime minister, and the defense minister, where he explained that a Rebbe is a spiritual father, and he therefore asked them to personally approve his *petur* so he could visit the Rebbe. When his friends heard about his



RASKIN FAMILY

REB LEIBEL RASKIN, LEFT, WITH RABBI YEHUDA KRINSKY IN JAMAICA ON MERKOS SHLICHUS, SUMMER 1957.

audacious move, they berated him. “Who are you to start messing around with the prime minister? Your actions could have severe implications for the entire Chabad in Eretz Yisroel!”

Truth to be told, as Reb Leibel related, he wasn’t so sure that they were wrong. Nervously, he waited for a response.

It wasn’t long in coming. A letter arrived from Nechemia Argov, the military secretary of the prime minister, inviting him to his office in Yerushalayim.

When he arrived at the meeting, Argov was interested in hearing about his life as a religious Jew in Russia. Reb Leibel told him about the *chinuch* of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch, about the Rebbeim, and explained that he wanted to continue that tradition near the Rebbe in New York.

Argov was impressed. He told Leibel that the government was sympathetic to Chabad, because of the encouragement Shazar had received from the Frierdiker Rebbe before the UN vote of 5707, and culminating with the founding of Kfar Chabad in 5709.

“I don’t know how you merited this,” he concluded, “but we decided to give you a *petur* for one year.”

B’Hatzlacha Gedolah

Leibel related the entire story about the *petur* and his upcoming journey in a letter to the Rebbe,⁴ to which the Rebbe responded with a *bracha* that the journey should be “with *hatzlacha*

gedolah.” On Friday, Erev Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-Vayelech, just several days before Rosh Hashana 5714, Leibel arrived in New York.

“Finally,” Reb Leibel related, “the anticipated moment had arrived, and *baruch Hashem* I arrived to be near the Rebbe. I still remember my emotions during that first *Mincha*. It was Friday and the *zal* was empty. To my best recollection, I was the only visitor from Eretz Yisroel that Tishrei. I stood in the corner, under the clock, and saw the Rebbe for the first time during that *Mincha*. It was the greatest *geshmak* I had ever experienced.”

“Your Place is Here”

For the next six years, Reb Leibel merited to learn by the Rebbe in 770, and had the *zechus* to participate in countless *farbrengens* and enter the Rebbe’s room for *yechidus*. He was also heavily involved in *hafotzas hama’ayanos* during those years, and was one of the main organizers of the Lag Ba’omer parades.

Reb Leibel would also write letters to his father and to others, describing the events in 770. Several letters serve as the only extant documentation of the events he described. They have been published in *teshuros* of his grandchildren’s weddings.

Lekutei Sichos

One of the Rebbe’s earliest campaigns was for *bochurim* to deliver words of Chassidus in shuls every week. Before Pesach 5718, Reb Leibel and two other *bochurim* formed an official *vaad* to help oversee the project, and each week they would choose a *sicha* for the *bochurim* to *chazer*.⁵

“For Shavuos 5718,” Reb Leibel related,⁶ “we arranged, for the first time, a *tahalucha* to Boro Park. Before Shavuos, I submitted to the Rebbe a list of the shuls where *sichos* would be *chazered*, together with the selected *sicha*.”

“Erev Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar (Shavuos was on Sunday and Monday) Rabbi Hodakov called me and asked if I submitted a *sicha* to the Rebbe. I answered that I did. He then showed me the *sicha*, and it was *mugah* by the Rebbe!

“It is impossible to describe the enormous *simcha* we had, that we were *zoche* to such an *ohr gadol*! We immediately printed 500 copies by stencil. That Shavuos and its *tahalucha* were very special. Even though it was raining like a *mabul*, the *hisorerus* of *anash* and the *temimim* was tremendous. This was particularly thanks to the *mugadike sicha* (with the theme of ‘our children are our guarantors).’

“Consequently, for Shabbos Parshas Nasso I submitted another *sicha*.”

“Thursday night I came to Rabbi Hodakov to inquire about the *sicha*. He told me:

“On the Rebbe’s desk there are more than 800 letters, a large portion of them dealing with matters of life-and-death, *pikuach nefesh*; what is more important, to answer these letters or to be *magiah* a *sicha*?!’

“I answered: ‘The *sicha* will strengthen ‘*chazaras dach*’ in the shuls, thousands of Jews will hear these *sichos*; it is a spiritual *pikuach nefesh*!’

“Rabbi Hodakov told me to wait. After contacting the Rebbe by phone, he called me back and informed me that in half-an-hour the Rebbe will return the *sicha*—*mugah*!

“I asked: What name should we give to these *sichos*-pamphlets? He suggested: תוכן ענינים בדא"ח לחזור בבתי כנסיות [Roughly translated: Concise concepts in Chassidus for delivery in shuls].

“At the outset, the Rebbe requested that we send in *sichos* he had previously edited for publications like *Bita’on Chabad* and *Kovetz Lubavitch*.⁷ There were very few such *sichos*. For Parshas B’haaloscha we found one in *Kovetz Lubavitch*, for Shelach we sent in two *sichos*—one *mugah* and one not, and for Korach we sent something brand new. The Rebbe was *magiah* it, and so it continued.

“Before we left for *Merkos Shlichus*, we sent the Rebbe six *sichos*, so the *bochurim* would be able to deliver them on their visits, and the Rebbe edited them within two days!”



“TOCHEN INYONIM B’DACH,” THE FIRST BOOKLETS OF THE REBBE’S MUGADIKE SICHOS, FOR BOCHURIM TO CHAZER IN LOCAL SHULS.

The connection the *bochurim* of those years had with the Rebbe was very unique. The *bochurim* felt as if the Rebbe was their father and mother and would often write to the Rebbe about their lives in great detail.

One experience Reb Leibel related about his correspondence with the Rebbe, related to his *hafotzas hama'ayanos* within 770:

There was a group of younger *bochurim* who studied in Tomchei Temimim at Bedford and Dean (the younger division of the yeshiva) who moved into the *zal* of 770. Some needed extra *chizuk* in their *chassidishkeit*, and Reb Leibel would spend time with them, learning and speaking about *chassidische inyanim*.

During his birthday *yechidus*, Reb Leibel asked the Rebbe for permission to join a group of older *bochurim* in their visits to other *yeshivos* where they would teach Chassidus. The Rebbe's answer was: since you already deal with *bochurim* in 770, you should not leave them.

Tachlis

One watershed moment for the *bochurim* in 770 was on Yud Shevat 5715. During the *farbrenge*, the Rebbe addressed an issue: the

"*klipah*" of "*tachlis*." Young American children are told to prepare for a livelihood from their earliest days in school.

"*Es volt geven a gleiche zach*," the Rebbe announced, "it would be appropriate, if a group of *bochurim* would decide to remove themselves from the ways of the world ("*hanachos ha'olam*"), and dedicate themselves to study Torah without thoughts of *tachlis*."⁸

Needless to say, after the Rebbe dedicated an entire *sicha* to the topic, the *bochurim* of 770 refused to think about any future plans. Their futures would be decided when they entered *yechidus* for their birthdays; if the Rebbe would instruct them to look for a *shidduch*, it meant that it was time to move on.

In 5718, Reb Leibel related, a Lubavitch woman from Eretz Yisroel accosted him in the street. "Why aren't you married yet? What sort of thing is this?"

Leibel retorted that the Rebbe hadn't instructed him to look for a *shidduch*, and he would do so only at the Rebbe's behest.

Several days later, he met her in the street once again.



REB LEBEL (SECOND FROM LEFT) JOINS A FARBRENGEN IN 770, CIRCA YUD SHEVAT 5730. SITTING NEXT TO HIM IS REB SHLOMO CHAIM KESSELMAN (RIGHT) AND RABBI NACHMAN SUDAK (LEFT).

“I need to apologize,” she said. “Yesterday I was in *yechidus* and I told the Rebbe about our conversation. The Rebbe said that you were right.”

A Firm Answer

In 5719, the Rebbe instructed Reb Leibel to look into *shidduchim*, and within a short time, he became engaged to his future wife, Hoda Raizel “תבלחט”א, the daughter of Reb Chaim Hillel Azimov of Paris.

At the time, Reb Leibel served as a temporary *mashpia* in Tomchei Temimim of Newark, and the faculty wanted him to stay on permanently. Reb Leibel, on the other hand, insisted he would do nothing without the Rebbe’s direct instructions. When he told Rabbi Hodakov about the discussions, Rabbi Hodakov approved of his answer. “The Rebbe has something in mind for you,” he said. “Just tell them you’ll think about it.”

On Isru Chag of Simchas Torah 5720, Reb Leibel was called into Rabbi Hodakov’s office.

“Being that you told me,” Rabbi Hodakov said, “that you are waiting for the Rebbe’s instructions, I want to inform you that the Rebbe would like you to travel to one of the countries in North Africa, either Tunisia or Morocco. Do you agree?”

“What’s the question?!”

“I need a straight answer. Yes, or no?”

“Of course, I agree.”

Rabbi Hodakov lifted the telephone on his desk. “*Er iz doh, un er iz mekabel*—he is here, and he has accepted the mission.”

Two minutes later, the Rebbe left for the Ohel.

Meanwhile, word of the new shlichus spread immediately in 770 and it became the news of the day. On Shabbos morning, as Reb Leibel was leaving the mikvah, an elder Chossid joined him for the walk down Eastern Parkway.

“How can you agree to move to a country that is so dangerous for Jews,” he argued.

Reb Leibel argued back. “If the Rebbe sent me, what is there to worry about?”

In the heat of the argument, they didn’t notice someone motioning to them from further down the street. Suddenly, as they approached 770, they saw the Rebbe quickly overtake them and enter the building. The Rebbe had been following them, and had overheard the entire conversation.

Later, the Rebbe mentioned to Rabbi Hodakov that he had enjoyed hearing Reb Leibel’s answers, and added that that is the proper way to behave;

to follow instructions without *chachmos* and to encourage others to do the same.

This Month

Meanwhile, the couple had been engaged for some time, and the Rebbe hadn’t given any instructions regarding a wedding date.

One day in the beginning of Kislev, Leibel was sitting in the small *zal* learning, when he was called into Rabbi Hodakov’s office.

“You wanted a *yechidus* as a *chossan*,” he told Leibel. “Go over to the Rebbe’s room; your *yechidus* will be right now.”

Shocked at the prospect of a *yechidus* without any prior notice, Reb Leibel walked over to the Rebbe’s room and knocked on the door. The Rebbe buzzed him in, and smiled as he walked in.

“You asked about a wedding date,” the Rebbe said, “I wanted to tell you that during Teves and Shevat, we try not to hold weddings, but Kislev is a good month to get married.” The Rebbe specified the second half of the month, and said to choose one of the nights of Chanukah.

This was Vov or Zayin Kislev. Reb Leibel was in New York, his parents were in Eretz Yisroel, and the *kallah* was in Paris.

Reading his thoughts, the Rebbe continued, “If you tell them [the *kallah*’s parents] that it was my suggestion, they will agree.”

The Rebbe concluded the *yechidus*, “It should be with *hatzlacha rabba*, and *beshav tovah u’mutzlacha*.”

Shlichus

The wedding indeed took place later that month on the fifth night of Chanukah (the *finfter lichtel*) in Paris. The Rebbe instructed Reb Nissan Nemanov to cut short his then visit to New York, and to be *mesader kiddushin* at the wedding as the Rebbe’s personal representative.

After the wedding, the young couple awaited the Rebbe’s instructions. Soon enough, Reb Binyomin Gorodetzky informed them that the Rebbe wanted them to move to Casablanca, Morocco, to join the shlich serving there from before, Rabbi Shlomo Matusof, who ran the Reshet Oholei Yosef Yitzchok schools. On Isru Chag Hapesach 5720, the couple moved to Casablanca.

At first, Reb Leibel began working in the administration of the *mosdos*, and then he became

the principal of Beis Rivkah. Alongside his work in *chinuch*, he opened “Ufaratzta,” a medium for *hafatzas hama’ayanos*, which basically served as the Tzach of North Africa.

Stay Put

After his first few months in Morocco energetically meeting and dealing with the Jews of Casablanca, Reb Leibel missed being by the Rebbe greatly. He bought a ticket for Tishrei 5721, and informed the Rebbe of his plan. He soon received a letter in express mail from the Rebbe, saying that it was too early to visit, and that he should rather spend Tishrei on shlichus.

What a Surprise!

During their few months in Paris, Reb Leibel immediately began working in *hafatzas hama’ayanos* in the city, something that had been previously lacking. Shortly after he left Paris, in a letter to Reb Sholom Mendel Kalmenson, the Rebbe wrote about his work:

“You mention the impact of Reb Leibel and his wife...

“Obviously, it is greatly surprising that after requesting and begging and writing endlessly to *anash* of Paris about the greatness of engaging in *hafatzas hama’ayanos*, only a bit here and a bit there was accomplished [with the excuse that there isn’t any more to do].

“With Hashem’s grace, someone arrived and pointed out several central locations in the city which were well known to all, and began doing work there, and nevertheless, almost nobody helped him...”

The first time he returned to New York was at the end of 5721. While in *yechidus*, he asked the Rebbe how to connect with the *nefesh* of the Moroccan Jews, and the Rebbe said two points:

“First of all, explain to them that we are not being *mechadesh* anything; North African Jews always studied Kabbalah and Zohar, etc. We are coming to strengthen what already exists, and mainly, to help bring in *lebedikeit*. Secondly, tell them stories of *tzaddikim*; that will be *mekarev* them.”

In those days, the Rebbe didn’t allow shlichim to come to New York often (—the official permission was for once in two years—) so similar trips to the Rebbe were a seldom event.

When Reb Leibel traveled to New York in honor of Yud Shevat 5730 (marking 20 years of the Rebbe’s leadership and the *siyum* of Moshiach’s Sefer Torah), he asked the Rebbe that this trip should not be counted, so that he would be able to come again for Tishrei the coming year. He also complained that he feels like he lost his *chassidisher hergesh*. The Rebbe responded that the very fact that he came to New York demonstrates that he still has a *chassidisher hergesh*, and the Rebbe agreed that it wouldn’t be counted.

This travel policy also affected his family visits. His parents lived in Eretz Yisroel, which he couldn’t visit from Morocco due to the hostile relations between the countries. He would see his father by the Rebbe in New York, but at one point Reb Leibel hadn’t seen his mother for 17 years!

There were additional times the Rebbe didn’t allow him to leave the country, due to security concerns. When his oldest son’s *bar mitzvah* took place in New York shortly after the Yom Kippur War, the Rebbe told Reb Leibel to remain in Morocco, while his brother, Reb Dovid Raskin, arranged the *bar mitzvah* in New York.

Even when he was granted permission to come, he wasn’t off the hook. On one of his trips to New York, Rabbi Hodakov told him that his shlichus always continues; in 770 his shlichus was to talk to the young people about shlichus, and to impart the meaning of *hiskashrus* and true dedication to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe in Every Home

Reb Leibel was full of life and enthusiasm, with a warm heart and a pleasant disposition. People in the community were immediately drawn to him



23 TISHREI 5747, MORDECHAI BARON VIA JEM 146767



and his warm words and gentle but persuasive talk were always met with positive feelings. His very presence energized the Jews of the city.

When it came to *inyanim of hiskashrus*, Reb Leibel was a firebrand. Everyone who came in contact with him immediately understood that he operates with one thing in mind: bringing the Rebbe *nachas*.

“A characteristic expression of my father’s *hiskashrus*,” says Rabbi Yitzchak Raskin of Vermont, “was before my *bar mitzvah* when my father wrote to me to include a statement in my *pan*, that I will dedicate myself to the Rebbe entirely, *beish ub’mayim*. In *yechidus*, when the Rebbe read those words, he looked up at me and broke into a broad smile.”

Although Chabad had been present in Morocco before Reb Leibel’s arrival and had established very successful educational institutions (See *The Building of an Empire, Derher Tishrei* 5778), Reb Leibel Raskin brought a new genre to the region. Reb Leibel had spent years in 770 near

the Rebbe, and now he brought the excitement of 770 along with him. *Hafotzas hama’ayanos*, through *mitvzoim*, Lag Ba’omer parades, *siyumei haRambam*, *shiurim*, and a great deal of *shturem*, brought the Rebbe’s work in Morocco to a new level.

“My father,” says Rabbi Mendel Raskin of Montreal, “came to Morocco directly from the Rebbe’s *shturem* of “*Ufaratzta*” in 5718-19, and that personified his entire being. He would walk down the street singing *Ufaratzta*, his Chabad House was called *Ufaratzta*, to the extent that when he would walk into a house, people would say, ‘Here comes *Ufaratzta*.’”

“One early project,” relates Reb Leibel’s son, Rabbi Hirshel Raskin of Montreal, “was to bring the Rebbe into every home in Morocco—literally. As soon as the Rebbe approved of the publishing of a specific picture, he immediately commissioned the printing of thousands of copies, and distributed them throughout the country.

The King and the Six Day War

Morocco is a Muslim country. In the early years after the Raskins' arrival, many Jews were leaving the country and relocating to Eretz Yisroel and France. Although Jews had a long history in Morocco, the local population became antagonistic and anti-Jewish with the founding of the State of Israel in 1948.

However, in a practical sense, living in Morocco was safe for a Jew because of the king's personal protection. He appreciated the Jewish population and took great strains to ensure their safety.

The king had very good relations with Lubavitch in the country, and would meet with them occasionally. He personally arranged free campgrounds for the Chabad summer camp and encouraged his people to help Chabad as much as possible.

However, there were periods when living in Casablanca was quite perilous, primarily after the Six Day War. The attitude towards Jews became very hostile, often to the point of violence, and a Jew was killed *r"l*.

A worried family member abroad wrote to the Rebbe, suggesting that the shluchim leave the country until the situation calms down, and the Rebbe responded in the negative. "*Di shluchim vet dos nit shaten. Di Yidden zeinen doch shluchim fun shluchim, vet zei oich nit shaten.* The shluchim will not be affected. The Jews are the shluchim of shluchim, and they won't be affected either." (This was first said regarding the shluchim in Tunis, and the Rebbe said it applies to Morocco as well.) Indeed, the volatile situation calmed down, and the shluchim were left untouched.

During other situations too, Reb Leibel always remained fearless in the face of danger. At one point, he was moments away from being evicted from the country, but that never took away one iota from his shlichus.



REB LEIBEL MEETS THE KING OF MORROCO.

Soon enough, every Jewish home had a picture of the Rebbe."

Another big project was translating the *sichos* into French, a language commonly spoken amongst the youth of Morocco, and distributing thousands of copies. When he reported this project to the Rebbe, the Rebbe responded that Merkos would cover a full 10 weeks of the publishing.

The Balebos of the Country

Several times over the years, Chassidim witnessed the Rebbe's view of the shlichus in Morocco, and what it represented in the stages of *hafotzas hama'ayanos*. On Simchas Torah 5731, when the Rebbe announced the creation of an alternative United Nations⁹ and appointed the shluchim and Chassidim from those countries



REB LEIBEL LEADS THE SIYUM HARAMBAM IN THE RAMBAM'S HOME IN FES, MOROCCO, 5745.

as the representatives, the Rebbe announced Reb Leibel as "*der balebos fun Marok.*"

At one point during his shlichus, Reb Leibel decided to commission the translation of Tanya



REB LEIBEL PASSIONATELY ADDRESSES THE CROWD AT HIS SON MENDEL'S BAR MITZVAH IN MOROCCO, 19 TAMMUZ 5735.



REB LEIBEL JOINS FELLOW CHASSIDIM IN A L'CHAIM, CELEBRATING YUD SHEVAT 5750, 40 YEARS OF THE REBBE'S NESIUS.

into Arabic. It turned out to be a very difficult task; finding a qualified translator, a publishing house, and everything else the printing entailed proved to be very hard in an Arab country, and the work took more than 10 years to complete.

When the first portion, Shaar Hayichud V'haemunah, was concluded in 5737, the Rebbe sent a very special *maaneh* and dedicated an entire *sicha* to the topic during the following farbrengen.¹⁰ The Rebbe spoke about the stages

Assassination Attempt

In 5731, Reb Leibel arranged a group trip to the Rebbe for the teachers of Beis Rivkah of Casablanca. The date of the trip was set for Sunday, 18 Tammuz.

As they were planning the trip, Reb Leibel received a mystifying answer from the Rebbe.

“Because of the constantly changing political climate [in our country as well], and the difficulty in predicting the situation in a few months time, it is not worthwhile for our institutions to get involved in things other than *chinuch* and *yiras Shamayim* etc. and especially not to arrange trips out of the country, even if they currently do not oppose it.”

No one understood the Rebbe's intent. President Nixon was then in the process of making peace with China, but how did that relate to Morocco?

Nonetheless, the project was shelved.

Months passed and the date approached. On Thursday, 15 Tammuz, when the Rebbe returned from the Ohel, he asked Rabbi Hodakov to inform Chassidim throughout the world that farbrengens should be held on Shabbos, Shiv'a Asar B'Tammuz, explaining, “*kivan sh'idche, idche*, because [the fast] was pushed off [to Sunday], it should be pushed off forever.”

In those days, *hora'os* like these would pass through a chain of command. *Mazkirus* would phone the regional offices of Chabad throughout the world, and they were responsible for passing on the information to their local branches.

Reb Nachman Sudak of London was tasked with informing Europe and North Africa. When he called the Raskin home, Reb Leibel wasn't available. Later, he called a second time and asked them to inform him of the Rebbe's *hora'ah*. It turned out that the Rebbe had called in Rabbi Hodakov and Reb Dovid Raskin to find out if the information had indeed been passed on throughout the world, “*Un tzu Marok oichet?*”

Hearing the Rebbe's question about Morocco specifically, Reb Dovid Raskin phoned London to make sure Morocco got the message, and Rabbi Sudak phoned a second time.

Implementing the Rebbe's instructions proved to be difficult. The students of the Chabad schools were on break, and many families were traveling on vacation. Nevertheless, on Shabbos afternoon, dozens of Jews gathered in the yeshiva for a grand farbrengen, which lasted well into the afternoon.

Minutes before Shabbos ended, a Jew ran into the room in panic. “Did you hear what happened? The king was assassinated by revolutionaries; the streets are empty and all the Jews are barricaded in their homes!”

The death of the king, the personal protector of the Jewish community, could spell disaster for the Yidden of Morocco. The farbrengen ended immediately; the gates of the yeshiva were locked, and *Maariv* and *havdalah* were quickly recited.

Reb Leibel rushed home, and found his house packed with Jews who lived in the surrounding area. Apparently, they felt the safest place in times of danger was the home of the Rebbe's shliach.

As the night progressed, the news began to trickle out. The king had actually survived the assassination attempt by a hairbreadth, and he quickly regained control over the country. During the investigations that followed, the police found stashes of guns and knives prepared for the murder of the local Jewish community...

Although calm was restored, an intense investigation was held, and the airports were shut down for several days. If anyone insisted on flying, he would be immediately arrested and interrogated to see if he was somehow connected to the attempted assassination.

Suddenly, the Rebbe's mysterious message several months earlier, and the *hora'ah* for that past Shabbos, all became understood.



REB LEIBEL WITH HIS GROUP THAT HE BROUGHT TO THE REBBE.

in *hafotzas hamayanos* of all the Rebbeim, how Chassidus translated into other languages was the stage of the Frierdiker Rebbe, and that the translation into Arabic was another step in that journey.

Later that year, during the farbrengen of Yud-Alef Nissan, Reb Leibel presented the Rebbe with a different publication that had been published in honor of the Rebbe's birthday. However, the Rebbe asked, "Could you bring me a Tanya as well?"

On various occasions, the Rebbe mentioned the uniqueness of this translation, that it brought Tanya into the *lashon haYishme'ilim*, and also that it was the language of Moreh Nevuchim.



Over the last two years of his life, Reb Leibel became terribly ill and underwent long periods of suffering. Nevertheless, he insisted on remaining in Morocco as long as possible, and in between bouts of treatment, he would return home to the Rebbe's shlichus, notwithstanding the intense discomfort.

Before the Kinus Hashluchim of 5764, Reb Leibel was in Canada for treatment, and the doctors forbade him to return to Morocco, but

he insisted. "To the Kinus Hashluchim, one must come from his shlichus." Even from his sickbed in North America, he directed the *peulos* of his shlichus, making sure that every Jewish child would properly celebrate Chanukah and Purim.

Reb Leibel Raskin passed away on 12 Iyar 5764 and was buried near the Ohel. A Chassid who breathed *hiskashrus* and who, indeed, went *bèish ub'mayim* for the Rebbe. ¹

1. See *Toldos Chabad B'Rusya HaSoveit*'s p. 390.
2. *Toras Menachem* vol. 1 pg. 37.
3. Part of the letter is printed anonymously, in *Igros Kodesh* vol. 7 pg. 60. The full version, with the included quote, was published in *Kfar Chabad Magazine* issue 1135 pg. 26.
4. *Teshura Eber-Raskin* 5774, pg. 17.
5. For the complete story, and an overview of Likutei Sichos, see *Derher Tammuz* 5777.
6. Reb Leibel related the story on several occasions. This account is taken from his letter to Rabbi Hodakov in 5748, printed in *Derher* Elul 5775 page 18. Some details have been added from his address at the Kinus Hashluchim 5763.
7. For the story of Kovetz Lubavitch, see *Derher* Elul 5775.
8. *Toras Menachem* vol. 13 pg. 247.
9. See *Derher Magazine*, Tishrei 5779.
10. Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5737. *Sichos Kodesh* 5737 vol. 1 pg. 370