

The Life of a Chossid

Reb Yehuda (Yuda) Eber

Born: 23 Nissan 5661*

Passed away: Kislev 5702*

Chossid of: The Rebbe Rashab and the Frierdiker Rebbe

Reb Yehuda (Yuda) Eber was born in a small village near Minsk called Krasnaluki, to his father, the Chossid Reb Avraham Yaakov the *melamed*. He was born on Isru Chag Pesach in the year 5661.

Already as a young child, he was recognized as being exceptionally bright and talented. When he was 10-years-old, he was accepted to study in the city of Lubavitch under Reb Yechiel Kamisar and Reb Shia Arsh. Four years later, when he was 13-years-old, he was accepted to study by the great Chossid and teacher Reb Shmuel Borisover, from whom he received his legendary, unique approach to learning, which he continued to develop his entire life.

In the summer of 5675* he began to learn in the branch of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Schedrin. One year later, in the summer of 5676*, he was accepted to the main *zal* of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in the city of Lubavitch.

In Kislev 5686*, when he was approximately 25 years old, Reb Yuda married Fraida, the daughter of Reb Menachem Mendel Schneersohn¹, a descendant of the TzemaCh Tzedek's oldest son, Reb Boruch Sholom (the "Rabash").

Between the years 5678* and 5690*, Reb Yuda held the position of *maggid shiur* and *mashgiach* in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Kharkov, Poltava and Nevel. During his time in these *yeshivos*, he would also give classes on Tanya. Russian Jewry suffered great oppression in those years and studying Torah in any shape or form was fraught with danger. Being a teacher of Torah, as he was, was dangerous on a whole new level and required much *mesiras nefesh*.

Reb Yuda Eber was beloved by the Frierdiker Rebbe, under whose leadership all of the branches of Tomchei

Temimim functioned. The Rebbe appointed him to carry out many secret as well as known activities on his behalf, strengthening the yeshiva network and spreading Yiddishkeit throughout the Soviet Union. Reb Yuda was one of very few Chassidim that the Rebbe personally entrusted to help carry out this holy mission.

After 12 years of being involved in the various branches of Tomchei Temimim in the USSR, in 5690*, Reb Yuda managed to escape with his wife and baby son, Avraham Elya, to Riga, Latvia, where the Rebbe resided at the time.

Throughout the month of Tishrei 5691*, many Chassidim and a group of older students from the yeshiva in Warsaw came to Riga to spend the month with the Rebbe. Reb Yuda was appointed by the Rebbe to test all the incoming students. They all got a glimpse into his unique approach and method of learning. That same year, he was appointed by the Frieridker Rebbe to be the *ra"m* and *rosh yeshiva* in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Vilna, Lithuania. From that point on, the yeshiva received a whole new reputation.

Reb Yuda met with the greatest scholars and *roshei yeshiva* in Vilna from all walks of life, and they all marveled at him, the young *rosh yeshiva*, who came from a country where Torah study was prohibited, and yet he acted and spoke as someone of their caliber.

He was also a giant in the study of Chassidus. In addition to teaching Tanya classes, he would also *chazer maamarim* with great clarity in the biggest shuls of Vilna. In 5692* Reb Yuda was appointed *ra"m* and *rosh yeshiva*



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in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Warsaw, Poland. This yeshiva was known for its great name as one of the greatest and most important yeshivos in Poland.

Reb Yuda would give a *shiur* once a week to over 100 older students and among them were many extremely talented minds. When he would give over his classes, everyone listened in absolute silence, taking in the words of wisdom flowing from his lips. After the *shiur*, his *talmidim* would gather in groups, *chazering* the *shiur* for hours on end, discussing the *chiddushim* and explanations he had given.

In addition to this, he would also give classes each day on Gemara, Rashi, and Tosfos. He loved his students with all his heart and they all respected him immensely.

In the summer of 5692*, the Frierdiker Rebbe appointed him to be the *menahel gashmi* of the yeshiva as well. He was now functioning as *rosh mesivta* and *menahel*, dealing with the physical and spiritual concerns of the students in the yeshiva, a job which he carried out exceptionally well.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe moved from Warsaw to Otwock in 5696*, the yeshiva—the headquarters of Poland's network of yeshivos—came along. All the branches of Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim that existed in Poland (Vilna, Lodz, Chmielnik, Kałuszyn, Pacanów, Chelm and more) were under the umbrella of the Central Yeshiva, and thus under Reb Yuda's supervision.

Between the years 5695* and 5698*, the publication "HaTomim" was published periodically. Reb Yuda Eber was the editor for *nigleh*, Reb Chatche Feigin was the editor for Chassidus and Reb Shmuel Zalmanov was the general editor. (As the Frierdiker Rebbe noted in a letter, the Rebbe was the main driving force behind the publication, although on paper his name was not there.)

Reb Yuda was known to be extremely precise in singing and teaching *niggunei Chabad* exactly as they were composed. In addition, he was a *menagen nifla* and composed numerous *niggunim* which are sung until today.

When the war broke out in 5699*, Reb Yuda worked tirelessly, spending much money, to save and assist in the rescuing of many students. In the winter of 5700* the Frierdiker Rebbe miraculously escaped from Nazi-occupied Otwock, Poland back to Riga, Latvia. The Frierdiker Rebbe

ensured that Reb Yuda, his wife Freida and his children Avraham Elya and Leah Henia, joined him in Riga. Later the Frierdiker Rebbe wanted to bring him to America, but due to the circumstances that did not prove possible.

In Kislev 5702*, Reb Yuda was murdered along with his family and thousands of other Jews in Riga.²

Reb Yuda once said that a person should memorize the following three parts of *davening*, during which the *siddur* isn't as accessible: "*Vayehi b'nesoa haaron*," *Kiddush Levana*, and *krias Shema*. In saying this, he alluded to the *deveikus* and crying that accompany a Chossid during *krias Shema*, which may render the Chossid unable to read the pages of the *siddur*.

During one of the Frierdiker Rebbe's *farbrengens*, the Chassidim were singing the stanzas of a *niggun* out of order. The Rebbe turned to Reb Yuda and made a hand motion that seemed to ask: "These are your students?" Reb Yuda internalized this rebuke, and immediately established a group of *talmidim* whom he taught *niggunim* with precision.

The Frierdiker Rebbe once asked for the Rebbe's opinion on Reb Yuda. In response, the Rebbe wrote the following to the Frierdiker Rebbe:

Regarding Y. Eber, it is difficult to determine something clearly based on short, superficial conversations. One good thing is immediately noticeable in him: his style of study focuses on the particular piece he is learning, without drawing proofs from faraway sources—instead focusing on the logic that exists in the piece itself.

Another thing [I noticed]: Throughout our conversation, I did not detect any arrogance or self-importance. This [character trait] is extremely rare.

In any case, these are only superficial impressions. I asked him for his *chiddushim* in writing so that I may be able to delve into them. **1**

1 Her brother was Reb Zalman Schneersohn from Paris (and later Brooklyn).

2. From the preface to *Shaarei Yehudah* by Reb Yehuda Eber. Translated and printed in the Naporstek-Grossbaum *teshura*, Sivan 22, 5778.