

THE REBBE'S CHIEF OF STAFF

RABBI CHAIM
MORDECHAI
AIZIK HODAKOV

מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות לכ"ק
אדמו"ר

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' שלום דוב בער וזוגתו מרת
חיה מושקא
בנותיו ברכה ליפשא, עליזה ושיינדל
ובנו מנחם מענדל שיחיו
שוחאט



Special thanks to Rabbi Shimon Kramer, Mendel Kramer, and other family members for their assistance in the preparation of this article. All stories were culled from Kfar Chabad Magazine's special edition following Rabbi Hodakov's passing, unless indicated otherwise.



JEM 20699

I Rabbi Binyomin Klein was once asked to describe Rabbi Hodakov in one word. He responded: “Soldier.”

Rabbi Klein explained:

“Rabbi Hodakov ran important institutions and did many important things, but he always behaved like a simple soldier. His only goal was to carry out the Rebbe’s will perfectly. He had no other desire, and he had no personal motives at all. Only someone who watched how he entered the Rebbe’s room each day, even after 50 years of being acquainted with the Rebbe, could possibly appreciate what a true Chossid and soldier looks like.

“In his official role, he was the director of Merkos, Machne, and Kehos, and later, Agudas Chassidei Chabad. He was also officially the *rosh hamazkirus*, the Rebbe’s chief secretary.

“But in more concrete terms, Rabbi Hodakov was the Rebbe’s contact with the entire world. For example, he was in charge of running *yechidus*; he decided who would be allowed into the Rebbe’s room and when—a very delicate and diplomatic job. He was also the conduit to reaching the Rebbe by phone. The Rebbe never spoke on the phone, but it happened quite often that the Rebbe would listen as Rabbi Hodakov held a conversation on his behalf. In simple terms, he was the one individual who spoke in the Rebbe’s name.

“Everything that left *mazkirus* passed through Rabbi Hodakov. Even simple things like the Rebbe’s letters for *simchos* which were arranged by Rabbi Simpson, were never sent out without Rabbi Hodakov’s approval.

“In everything Rabbi Hodakov did, two main characteristics were expressed: First of all, his *bitul* to the Rebbe, and second of all, his *pikchus*, his wisdom and logic. One more characteristic—he never wasted a moment.”

THE MAN AND THE LEGEND

Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Aizik Hodakov was the Rebbe's legendary "chief of staff," serving in that capacity throughout all the years of the Rebbe's *nesius*. Rabbi Hodakov's presence was ubiquitous; every interaction, every *hora'ah*, every message from the Rebbe—when not delivered publicly at farbrengens—was delivered through the expert hands of Rabbi Hodakov.

Rabbi Hodakov is part and parcel of every story of the Rebbe; his identity is intertwined with *dor hashvi'i*. A simple search of the Derher archives brought up Rabbi Hodakov's name hundreds of times—but almost never was it a story that involved him at all. Every interaction, every mention, was bringing a message of the Rebbe to a Chossid and the Chossid's response back to the Rebbe.

So integral was he that a statement from Rabbi Hodakov could never be taken lightly. Everyone knew that a word from his mouth could have come directly from the Rebbe; he didn't have to clarify it.

Rabbi Leibel Alevsky relates that he once questioned this assumption during his years as director of Tzach. "Rabbi Hodakov once made a suggestion for Tzach which didn't sit right with me. I told him, respectfully, 'If this suggestion comes from the Rebbe, I will obviously accept it without question, but—' Rabbi Hodakov cut me off and said, 'In your opinion, if the Rebbe wants to make a suggestion but doesn't want it to be given over in his name, what exactly should he do?' Needless to say, I quickly accepted the proposal.

"Often, Rabbi Hodakov would make various suggestions regarding our activities. Some of them seemed



RABBI HODAKOV STANDING ALONGSIDE THE REBBE AS THE FRIEDIKER REBBE RECEIVES HIS AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP ON 16 ADAR I, 5709.

to be very impractical. Sometimes I would carry them out, and sometimes I would not. During one *yechidus*, the Rebbe suddenly began speaking about those same suggestions I had received from Rabbi Hodakov—which I had ignored. I was obviously very shocked and surprised... Needless to say, I began to treat Rabbi Hodakov's 'suggestions' with a new respect."¹

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE REBBE

Rabbi Hodakov's connection to the Rebbe began in early 5688*, when the Frierdiker Rebbe left Russia and settled in Latvia. Rabbi Hodakov was a young man and already a noted educator and activist in the community. He also came from a Chabad-Lubavitch background—he was born in the Chabad town of Beshenkovitz in Russia before moving to Latvia as a child.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe needed a visa to enter Latvia, Rabbi Hodakov assisted Reb Mordechai Dubin in his efforts, and he immediately connected himself with the Frierdiker Rebbe upon his arrival. He quickly

became a dedicated Chossid, and the Frierdiker Rebbe devoted much attention to his new protege.

It was in this context that Rabbi Hodakov came into contact with the Rebbe.

In his own words:

"I entered the home of the Frierdiker Rebbe on Motzei Shabbos after *havdalah* [the first Shabbos after the Rebbe arrived from Russia] and a sight struck me: The new guest from Yekatrinoslav was reciting *Veyiten Lecha*; he was holding a siddur with both hands, looking inside, and reciting the words quietly



and simply. It is hard to describe but the image really took me. At that moment, I recognized *emes b'taharasa*, pure unadulterated truth. It seems like something minor, but this 'minor' thing and similar minor things demonstrated greatness, which I noticed at the time."

The Rebbe was living in Berlin at the time, but Rabbi Hodakov had many opportunities to be in the Rebbe's presence. One notable period was during Tishrei 5690*, documented at length in the beautiful writings of Reb Elya Chaim Althaus. In the absence of the Frieddiker Rebbe, who was visiting America, the Rebbe led the Chassidim throughout Tishrei and held a memorable farbrengen that Motzei Rosh Hashanah where he instructed all the Chassidim to turn their *kapotas* inside out to reject "the way of the street." It made a deep impression on Rabbi Hodakov.

One more memorable occasion was Rabbi Hodakov's visit to the Frieddiker Rebbe in Warsaw when he was already the Agudas Yisrael representative in the Latvian Department of Education. "In order to be granted permission to go," Rabbi Hodakov related, "I told the government that my travel to Poland had to do with my work; I was going to get special books and speak to certain people about education."²

On the Shabbos of his visit, four individuals were invited to the Frieddiker Rebbe's Shabbos table—the Rebbe and Rabbi Hodakov among them. At the table, the Frieddiker Rebbe delivered a *maamar* on the topic of *hashgacha pratis*. Later, while in *yechidus*, the Frieddiker Rebbe told him, "The *maamar* will come to good use." Rabbi Hodakov never clarified what it meant, but from his way of repeating the story it was clear that he had already discovered its use in his many years working alongside the Rebbe.



A MEMORANDUM PUBLISHED BY MERKOS L'INYONEI CHINUCH IN THE 5700S, NAMING THE REBBE AS CHAIRMAN AND RABBI HODAKOV AS DIRECTOR.

THE SIX WEEK VACATION

Following the Nazi invasion of Poland, the Frieddiker Rebbe escaped the country and, on his way to America, spent a short time in Latvia. By that time, Rabbi Hodakov had reached the height of his career; he was the government-appointed minister responsible for all Jewish education in the country, single-handedly controlling the educational curriculum of thousands of Jewish children.

But the Frieddiker Rebbe had other plans.

The Frieddiker Rebbe wasn't coming to America as a refugee fleeing persecution. He was coming to America on a mission—to change the face of the United States—and he wanted Rabbi Hodakov to take part in the revolution.

At the time, Latvia seemed to be a safe place; it was a neutral country, not seeking involvement in the war, and it didn't seem like the Nazis would invade. The Frieddiker Rebbe's mission to America, on the other hand, seemed quite far-fetched indeed. Nonetheless, being a devoted Chossid, Rabbi Hodakov didn't think

twice and began to plan his trip.

"I would get two weeks of vacation each year," he related. "Since I never took a vacation and I had been working for the government for three years, I had saved up six weeks of vacation time. So I told the government that I would be taking a six week vacation and began preparing for the trip.

"There was very little room on the ship to the United States and there weren't enough tickets for me. Rashag saw how strongly the Frieddiker Rebbe wanted me to come, so he worked hard until he obtained a ticket for me.

"However, this was shortly after my marriage. I suggested to the Frieddiker Rebbe that since there were no more



RABBI HODAKOV AT WORK IN MAZKIRUS.



tickets on the ship, my wife should just take the next boat and meet me in America. The Friediker Rebbe became very serious, and said: אויב זי פארט נישט יעצט, וועט זי נישט פארן—if she doesn't travel now, she will not travel at all. When I approached Rashag, he told me that there was nothing he could do, as there were not enough tickets for my wife. When I reported back to the Friediker Rebbe, he suggested that I tell Rashag that I would not come without my wife; that would encourage him to do everything in his power to obtain a ticket. That's what happened; although it was very difficult, Rashag obtained a ticket for her as well.”²

While on the boat, the Friediker Rebbe called him and asked him to prepare a detailed plan for building Yiddishkeit on American soil. His plan focused on three things: Jewish education, working with youth, and Jewish publications. The Friediker Rebbe approved of his plans, and that served as the template for the beginning of *hafatzas hamaayanos*.

When the Rebbe arrived in America a little more than a year later, the Friediker Rebbe established the three institutions of Merkos, Machne Yisroel, and Kehos; he appointed the Rebbe to be chairman, and Rabbi

Hodakov to be director. From that day on—for over 50 years—Rabbi Hodakov worked together with the Rebbe on a daily basis. At first, they worked together in the Rebbe's office—which was the central office of Merkos—working at the same desk (along with Rabbi Nissan Mindel) until 5707*, when Merkos was moved across the hall and the Rebbe's room became his alone.

By Rabbi Hodakov's own account, he was already close to the Rebbe in Europe, and the connection only grew in the United States. “I remember that when the Rebbe published the *Hayom Yom*,” he told his grandson, “I came over to his house and helped him edit it; one of us would read, and the other one would check to make sure that the language was correct.”

After Yud Shevat 5710*, as it became increasingly clear that the Rebbe would assume the *nesius*, Rabbi Hodakov assumed the role of *mazkir*, being responsible for *yechidus* and a range of other activities.

A CAPTAIN TO THE SHLUCHIM

As the director of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch and the Rebbe's chief

secretary, Rabbi Hodakov was the one who guided and counseled all the new shluchim of the early years. In later years, one of the main sessions of the kinus was the lengthy address of Rabbi Hodakov, where he would discuss the important matters of the day.

“Rabbi Hodakov spent significant amounts of time with me on the phone and guided me on every aspect of our shlichus,” relates Rabbi Pinchus Feldman of Sydney. “When we first moved out, I told Rabbi Hodakov that I didn't know how I would manage to accomplish everything the Rebbe wanted. Rabbi Hodakov wrote to me that I should always remember that ‘*im katan atah b'einecha, rosh shivtei Yisrael atah*—you might be small in your own eyes, but you are a leader in Israel.’ One interesting directive I received about my position was that I should receive the highest salary in the organization. This is because *baalei batim* associate importance with the level of salary. Therefore, it was imperative that I be paid the highest salary.”³

Reb Efraim Wolff, who directed the Rebbe's activities in Eretz Yisroel, would speak daily with Rabbi Hodakov.

“My first meeting with Rabbi Hodakov was in Riga, when he was



RABBI HODAKOV ADDRESSING THE GENERAL SESSION OF THE KINUS HASHLUCHIM.

the minister of Jewish education,” Rabbi Wolff related. “From my first conversations with him, I understood that he was a unique personality. He was a fascinating blend of genuine *yiras Shamayim* and real, down to earth intelligence. He was also a *masmid*, always finding time to learn. He always spoke with cutting logic; dissecting an issue at its full depth, but always making it clear and understood.”

Rabbi Hodakov was also the one who cared for the Rebbe 24/7. He would often “smooth out” the reports he gave the Rebbe at times when a Chossid was involved in something unbecoming, but then he would pick up the telephone and deliver a real *shtikel mussar*. And the individual would make sure that it would not happen again.

“My connection with Rabbi Hodakov began in 5732,*” writes Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Levin, “when I began to work as a secretary for Agudas Harabanim. At one point, there was an important conference regarding *Mihu Yehudi*, and I received a phone call from Rabbi Hodakov. Suddenly, I realized the Rebbe was on the line; I was a bit overwhelmed, but Rabbi Hodakov continued carrying on the conversation.

“It was interesting to see how he responded. I would hear the Rebbe quietly tell him what to ask, and despite the fact that I heard it, he would repeat it as if I haven’t heard at all. Sometimes, the Rebbe would respond with barely a word, but he always understood and delivered a full response to me immediately.

“There was something very unique about Rabbi Hodakov. We all have our moments when we are tense or in a foul mood. But I spoke with Rabbi Hodakov two or three times a week for many years, and he always sounded exactly the same. He never showed any emotion. He never got



RABBI HODAKOV RECEIVES GUESTS IN HIS MODEST OFFICE.

upset and never showed any sign of tension or hurriedness. He always spoke to you in the same measured tone and with full attention.”⁴

Rabbi Shimon Lazaroff related his experiences:

“I received countless suggestions from Rabbi Hodakov, all in his unique and original perspective. But more importantly, he didn’t just give us advice. He educated us. For example:

“After I received my *shlichus* to Texas, he told me to draw up a contract which would outline my responsibilities. He told me that his own responsibilities—aside for *mazkirus*—are in *Machne*, *Merkos* and *Kehos*. My responsibilities were the same: First of all, *chinuch* of the youth—youth in years and youth in level of education. Secondly, caring for the *gashmius* of Jews. Third, spreading Yiddishkeit through print.

“Years later, during a conversation, he pressed me regarding the state of *mikvaos* in Texas, wondering why a certain city did not have a proper mikvah. ‘Remember,’ he told me, ‘We discussed before you left that you are responsible for all matters of Yiddishkeit in your region. I want to remind you that this is indeed so—their

Yiddishkeit is your responsibility.”

CHILDHOOD

Rabbi Hodakov was known to be precise in everything he did. Every second of his time was utilized, and every penny of his organizations was accounted for. He rarely spoke about himself; time was always used for Torah learning, and stories were told only with a practical *hora'ah*.

After numerous requests from his grandsons Rabbis Eliyahu and Shimon Kramer, he agreed to relate some of his personal history on one *nittel nacht* evening. The following are segments from those recollections:

“I was born in the town of Beshenkovitz, a Chassidic town, and I was raised with many stories of Chassidim which had a great impact on me. When I was two years old, my family moved to Riga, Latvia, which was then part of Czarist Russia. Jews were not allowed to live in Riga at the time; my father had special permission to live there, because he was a businessman.

“The Jews in Riga were mostly secular, but after the revolution, many Chassidic families moved in. There were three types of Chabad Chassidim living there: Lubavitch, Liadi, and

Kopust. The Chassidim bought a long building to house three shuls. On the right was the Lubavitcher Shul, in the middle was the Liadi Shul, which was the smallest, and the last shul was the Kopuster Shul. In general, we had a very close relationship; however, Liadi had a closer relationship to Lubavitch than Kopust.

“My father used to daven in the Liadi Shul. I remember this from when I was very young, since he passed away before my bar mitzvah. I don’t know why he davened there, and I don’t know if he was a Lubavitcher or not.

“The *maskilim* in Riga had such large schools, that each grade had its own building! The government helped them a lot, even giving them funding, and there were no other good schools. These schools couldn’t find enough teachers who were *maskilim*. Thus, many teachers were good, religious, people, and I was enrolled there when I was five years old.

“In the middle of third grade, I became very sick, and I missed six weeks of school. The next year, the principal told me that I must stay in third grade, but I thought that it was below my dignity, so I went to a private school in the house of a good teacher who was a *yarei Shamayim*.

This was a great *hashgacha pratis*, because the teacher of fourth grade at the public school was very modern.

“At age 10, I enrolled in a private school which had *limudei kodesh* alongside the *limudei chol*, where I remained for three years until I graduated. At this school I had the opportunity to learn *limudei kodesh* well; my next school had only one or two hours of Torah studies and there I was considered a *gaon*!

“When I was around 13-14 years old, I learned in Tiferes Bachurim, which was run by a *mussarnik* named Rabbi Yoel Barantchik. We learned and davened in one of the *cheder sheini*s of the Lubavitcher Shul. Thus, I ended up davening there on Shabbos and Yom Tov. When the Frierdiker Rebbe came to Riga, he farbrenged with the Tiferes Bachurim, (myself included), and Rabbi Yoel was there too. The Frierdiker Rebbe was *mekarev* him very much.

“In those years, Latvia had many children and few teachers, so many summer programs were opened to train teachers. I decided to go to one of these programs, and I got a diploma for teaching children. Then, I became a teacher at the school Torah V’Derech Eretz—before I even turned 17!

“Soon afterwards, I became the assistant principal. Afterwards, I became the principal for the younger division. And then, I became the principal for the older division, followed by becoming the principal for the university. However, I still had a little to do with the younger division.

“This went on until I was in my thirties. Then, I was chosen to be part of the committee for Jewish education. The government paid for all the schools, even the religious ones, and the government made committees to oversee every religion’s schools. Later on, I became the head of the whole Jewish committee. Then, since the government was short on money, they made a policy change. Instead of having a whole committee for each religion, they decided to appoint one minister to supervise all the learning for each religion. They picked me to be the minister for Jewish education, and I worked there until leaving Latvia with the Frierdiker Rebbe.”

FIRST CLASS EDUCATOR

Rabbi Avraham Godin was a close friend of Rabbi Hodakov’s in Riga.

RABBI HODAKOV AS A CHILD.

AN ORIGINAL VORT WRITTEN BY RABBI HODAKOV AT THE AGE OF 11.



RABBI HODAKOV (BOTTOM ROW, SECOND FROM LEFT) PARTICIPATING IN THE CONGRESS OF THE AGUDAS YISROEL YOUTH IN RIGA IN 1913.



THE REBBE LOOKS ON AS RABBI HODAKOV IS HONORED WITH THE READING OF THE KESUBAH UNDER A CHUPAH.

After Rabbi Hodakov passed away, he shared the following recollection:

“I would go with my grandfather to the Lubavitch shul, where I noticed a 16-year-old boy, dressed in the high school uniform of the local Jewish school. I noticed the seriousness and the *yiras Shamayim* with which he davened from his siddur, always at the same place in shul. But more importantly, I was impressed by his untouched beard—something that was very unique at the time, even among the older people.

“When Reb Yoel Barantchik opened Torah V’Derech Eretz, the first real religious school in the country, he needed a principal that would ensure a high level of learning in the school, and he chose Rabbi Hodakov despite his young years.

“Rabbi Hodakov was a natural *mechanech*. When we arrived in the morning, he was there, and he remained late into the night. Children

notice everything, and we definitely noticed his dedication. He carefully followed the progress of every student and the accomplishments of every teacher, and he made sure to provide assistance to children who were lagging behind.

“Within a short time, the school became very highly regarded. A few years later, a four-story building was purchased, and a few years after that, it was no longer large enough either, and a new facility was acquired.”

Rabbi Hodakov soon asked Reb Avraham to become his personal secretary, and later appointed him to lead organized groups of alumni. The organization of religious Jews led to the prominence of the Agudas Yisrael, and soon, the government was providing money for the schools. When the government looked for someone to serve as the Jewish ‘Minister of Education,’ Reb Mordechai Dubin

suggested Rabbi Hodakov.

This was shortly after the arrival of the Frieddiker Rebbe. Rabbi Hodakov had become a devoted Chossid, and the Frieddiker Rebbe supported Rabbi Hodakov in everything, ensuring that all Chassidim sent their children to his schools, even recommending it for girls from out-of-town.

Reb Avraham continues his account:

“Rabbi Hodakov first did a survey of all the Jewish schools, which revealed the low level of Jewish knowledge in the secular schools. His first enactment was to ensure that every school taught classes in Tanach and Jewish tradition. Then, he announced that teachers must wear yarmulkes during those classes. Over time, anti-religious teachers found themselves outside the schools while their places were taken by teachers with a more positive sentiment about Yiddishkeit. For Jewish children in Latvian public school, Rabbi Hodakov arranged Jewish classes for several hours a week.

“Within a short time, the Latvian Jewish community changed drastically. The shuls began filling up, people began to observe Shabbos, and the level of



RABBI HODAKOV IN HIS YOUTH.

Yiddishkeit was greatly improved.”

Reb Moshe Blau, the head of Agudas Yisrael in Eretz Yisroel, visited Riga in 5697* and wrote the following:

“Mr. Hodakov, by dint of his position, has instituted many important reforms in the general Jewish school and even in the Zionist ones. He made religious studies mandatory and forbade the teaching of *kefirah*. The Zionists in Latvia are *ne’enachim vene’enakim*, sighing and groaning, under the yoke of Mr. Hodakov. They are not able to uproot Torah and *emunah* from the young generation as they wish—even from their own children...”

Rabbi Hodakov didn’t leave his educational duties during his years as the Rebbe’s secretary. Chabad educational institutions—

especially Beis Rivkah—received countless hours of Rabbi Hodakov’s undivided attention and guidance. He also was the go-to for guidance in Oholei Torah throughout the years. No problem was too small and no issue was too insignificant.

A MODERN-DAY YEHOSHUA BIN NUN

“We often draw attention to the fact,” writes Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Levin, “that the Rebbe never took a day of vacation and never left Crown Heights besides for visits to the Ohel, and the fact that he would receive visitors for *yechidus*

sometimes until ten in the morning. All of these are true also about Rabbi Hodakov. He never took a vacation and he was at all the *yechidusen*, leaving only after the Rebbe left for home... Whenever I think about Rabbi Hodakov, I’m reminded of Yehoshua bin Nun, the student of Moshe Rabbeinu, who never left his tent—*lo yamish mitoch ha’ohel*.” **T**

1. <https://anash.org/when-rabbi-chodakov-relayed-the-rebbes-secret-orders/>
2. Written recollections by Rabbi Shimon Kramer.
3. Derher Adar I 5779 pg. 57.
4. Kfar Chabad issue 1504.

FAMILY MEMBERS REMINISCE

In our conversations with Rabbi Hodakov’s family members, they shared some recollections with us.

One notable point was that Rabbi Hodakov never used his position to get his family preferential treatment. In fact, many of his daughter’s friends sometimes had a *yechidus* with their fathers, but she never did till around age 18, when she merited a personal *yechidus* after requesting one from her father for a very long time.

In general, when he was ‘at work,’ he was fully invested, a devoted worker for his boss, and he didn’t give any special privileges to family. When they received answers from the Rebbe, they weren’t permitted to keep the handwritten notes, as per *mazkirus* policy.



YOSSI HODAKOV DOING HOMEWORK ALONGSIDE HIS ZAIKY’S WORK IN MAZKIRUS.

When the Rebbe gave a *haskama* and *bracha* for his son’s engagement, he first called the house as ‘Rabbi Hodakov’ to give over the Rebbe’s answer, insisting on giving it directly to his son—because *mazkirus* policy was to give answers only to the direct individual for concerns of privacy—and afterwards he called back as the father to say *mazal tov*.

He was always very private about the work he did for the Rebbe. Everything was confidential, and he never repeated things that happened in the course of his role. Sometimes, people would tell his daughter stories that involved him; when she would repeat them to him, he would listen attentively as if he was hearing the story for the first time.

His dedication to the Rebbe’s work was exemplary. He took no vacations. When he left 770 for any reason, even a family *simcha*, it was per the instructions of the Rebbe. On one occasion, when he was not well and in the hospital, his daughter came to visit. He was on the phone dealing with the affairs of *mazkirus* for so long that she barely had a moment left to speak to him before she had to leave. When he finally hung up, she said, “This looks like a branch of Merkos.” He responded, “A temporary one.” When he wasn’t making calls, many doctors of the hospital would come in to visit and sit with him

discussing various matters. They realized this patient is someone special and enjoyed conversing with him.

He would often get calls at home at all hours of the night. It could have been an emergency, or perhaps people around the world with a different time zone calling at their convenience. On one occasion, during the night, a call came from a high ranking official in the Israeli government. When Rabbi Hodakov picked up the phone and the caller identified himself, he asked, "How do I know that it is really you?" It seemed the caller then gave him some *siman* to verify his identity before they were able to have the conversation.

Sometimes he was urged to take more time for himself, but he would say, "*Es brent a fire!*" How could he take time when there are so many urgent matters to attend to? However, he never expected the same from others. A shliach told the family that when he arrived from out-of-town and came over to Rabbi Hodakov to discuss urgent matters, Rabbi Hodakov first asked the shliach if he already ate something.

On a regular day, he would come home at approximately 2:00 p.m. for lunch and rush back to 770. He would return for supper at around seven, and again rush back to 770 until late at night, returning after his children were long asleep. His daughter would often leave him a note with what she wanted to tell him. Often, early in the morning, he would wake her up early and give her time to learn or do homework with him. Most mornings, he would wake her up. Even when the Rebbe had those long *yeichidus* nights, when he would sometimes still be at 770 when it was wake-up time, he would call their home to ensure that she woke up in time for school. He was always extremely busy, but he always found time to spend with both his son and his daughter, and it was quality time. Later, he would also spend precious quality time with his grandchildren and also had a shiur with his son-in-law once a week.

Rabbi Hodakov was very careful with time. Every second was important and not to be wasted. He explained to his daughter about class behavior, that if she disturbs the class for two minutes, she steals not only two minutes that she can never give back—but if there are 20 girls in the class whose time she took, she takes from them a total of 40 minutes that she can't return to them. They are gone.

He used every opportunity to teach a lesson. He once took his young children to visit the fire station, where they climbed on the trucks and got to see all



RABBI HODAKOV WOULD USUALLY GO HOME TOGETHER WITH THE REBBE LATE AT NIGHT (IN THE EARLY YEARS BY FOOT AND LATER BY CAR) AND THEN PROCEED TO HIS OWN HOME. IN THIS PICTURE, THE REBBE CAN BE SEEN HOLDING HOSHANOS FOR THE REBBETZIN.

the trinkets. He took them again another day, and then again. Finally, during the third trip, he got what he wanted. While they were at the fire station, the alarm bells rang, indicating that there was a fire. He rushed the children safely out of the way, and they watched in amazement as the firemen slid down the poles in record time. The engines started, the address was announced, the firemen jumped onto the trucks and pulled on their boots and coats with hats, while the trucks were already moving out—everything happening within seconds. As they stared in wonder, he told the children, "This is *zrizus!*"

Despite his often serious demeanor, he was very humorous as a father and had a very quick wit. He also stressed a lot about being *besimcha*. He taught a tremendous amount just by his example. With his Torah learning even when very tired; and getting up early and learning even after a long night in 770; or the way he recited a simple *bracha* slowly and carefully; his *middos*; and much more.

When his children were very young, he would sit at their bedsides every Friday night and Motzei Shabbos (the other nights he was in 770 when they went to sleep) and tell them Chassidishe stories and sing *niggunim*, which would include Reb Michele Zlotchover's *niggun*. On Motzei Shabbos, he would also talk to them about Moshiach and sing Eliyahu Hanavi, telling them that Eliyahu Hanavi will come and bring us the good news that Moshiach is coming. In her young years, his daughter would be so hopeful when she heard a knock on the door, hoping and wishing with all her heart that finally this knock is Eliyahu Hanavi coming to tell us Moshiach is coming. It is these experiences that remain ingrained within her until this very day.